Buddhism in Thailand

Published by The World Buddhist University

E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.



Ayutthaya

Buddhism
in
Thailand

*

Published in commemoration of
the 4th General Meeting of the
World Buddhist University Council
at the Grand Blue Wave Hotel,
Shah Alam, Selangor, D.E. Malaysia
on 9-10 December B.E. 2545 (2002).

Contents

THE WORLD BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY

Preface

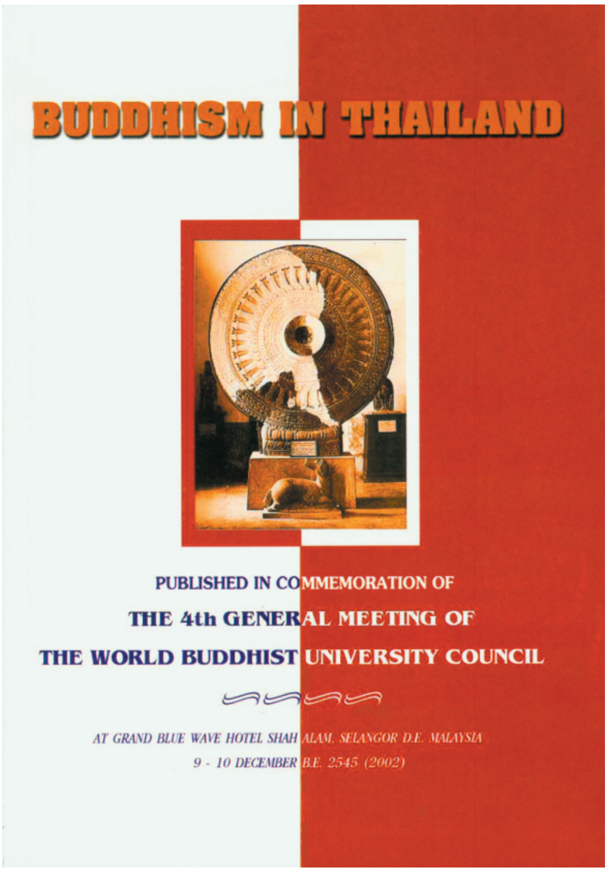
This current volume, *Buddhism in Thailand*, is published in commemoration of the 4th General Meeting of the World Buddhist University Council – held at the Grand Blue Wave Hotel in Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia from 9 to 11 December, 2002 – and is a revision and re-publication of an earlier volume published under the same title by the World Fellowship of Buddhists in B.E. 2524 (1980 A.D.). This work presents facts and figures about the current condition of Buddhism in Thailand, historical background sketches of the establishment and growth of the Buddhist community in Thailand and information on Buddhist education in Thailand.

Buddha Dhamma was first pursued and took firm root in ancient Thailand during the Sukhothai period, the first Thai kingdom. Today there are thousands of Buddhist structures, pagodas and temples scattered about in every corner of the country. Buddhism is a religion of peace and is the religion of Thailand. Buddha Dhamma has played a profound role in forging the peaceful and tolerant nature of the Thai people. The Thai peoples' now-famous smile, friendliness and relaxed attitude all attest to their underlying commitment to the teachings of the Buddha. The effect of Buddhism in Thailand is not only to be found in the personal and mental peace of its people but can also

be seen in their pursuit of academia, careers, family life and so forth. The discipline of Buddhism teaches skill in looking after one's self and one's community. This is what is pursued in Buddhist Thailand.

Thanks are due to H.E. Phan Wannamethee, President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, who kindly granted permission for publishing this volume. It is hoped that the material presented in this book will provide the reader with a clear view of the role of Buddhism in Thailand.

Noranit Setabutr
Rector, World Buddhist University



PART ONE: BUDDHISM IN THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Chapter One

Buddhism In India After The Master's Demise

With respect to the Buddha's instruction to the bhikkhus before his passing away, informing them that his doctrine, that is to say the Norm and the Law, shall be their teacher when he is gone, it is well to have at least a bird's eye view of the history of the Dhamma or his Doctrine from the time of his Parinibbana (passing away) up to the present time. This may give a better understanding and a firm foundation for reasonable belief for those intellectuals who wish to know something of the historical facts in addition to the Message itself.

It is generally believed that during the Master's lifetime there was no systematic classification of the Doctrine as is known in the present. Like a variety of scattered flowers blooming here and there in the garden, the teaching of the Master must have been maintained orally and individually; that is to say, according to the tendency of individual disciples. These instructions and admonitions given by the Master were systematically arranged, like

the arranging of flowers in a vase, by wise and holy disciples after the Master's passing away.

We learn from historical facts that shortly after the Buddha's passing away there was what could be called a bad omen for those who were well-wishers of Buddhism. The tears of his mourners had not yet dried when a follower of the devoted Elder Kassapa, an old bhikkhu called Subhadda, suddenly surprised – or rather shocked – the mourners by the bold declaration that now the Master had passed away it would be better, in that there would no longer be anyone to force them or forbid them to do this and to do that.

This, to the Venerable Kassapa, foreshadowed the deterioration of the Buddha's doctrine if left unchecked. So he expressed his concern to the other devoted Elders, who were Arahats, or Saints. They were unanimous in their support of his plan – that there should be held a Council of Elders or Arahats for the sake of reciting the Message of the Master, so that it could be memorised and handed down in its pristine purity to the younger generations.

With such an agreement, the place and the persons who were to participate in this great undertaking had been proposed and carefully selected. The cave of Sattapanna, of Vebhara mountain in the town of Rajagaha, was finally chosen and the participants, according to general agreement, were to be the Buddha's contemporary Arahats. This was the first Sangāyanā, or Buddhist Council, which lasted seven months, during which King Ajatasattu of

Magadha was the prime supporter and host and contributed the financial help for expediting this great task.

This Sangāyanā, attended by 500 Arahat contemporaries of the Buddha, was undertaken for the purpose of settling upon the contents of the Buddhist Canon by revising, classifying and standardizing the various teachings of the Buddha during the 45 years of his preaching. Obviously it was a great enterprise as well as a huge undertaking. It is not an overestimate, therefore, to say that much, or rather most of the success was due to the Venerable Ananda, who was the Master's personal attendant bhikkhu (Buddhist monk) and who had heard and committed to memory almost all of the Suttas and the Abhidhamma, these being the second and third of the three Baskets (Tripiṭaka) of the Buddhist Canon. Work on the first of the Baskets – concerning the Vinaya, or Monastic Law – was accomplished through the memory of the Venerable Upāli, who had always distinguished himself in that field. After the process of questioning and answering in detail, all other attending Arahats, or Saints including the Venerable Kassapa, who presided over the Council, recited those passages repeatedly until they were word-perfect. Just how great and difficult this task was may be seen from the fact that the Council continued for seven months before the entire teachings were satisfactorily revised.

When the meeting was closed the participating Arahats then went forth on their missionary work, preaching to their own followers the Dhamma, or Message, that had

been studied during the Council. We cannot hope to adequately express the depth of our gratitude for those pioneers, Venerable Kassapa. Ananda and Upāli, without whom we – who were born so long after the Master's Parinibbana (absolute passing away) – would be lost in unimaginable ignorance.

THE SECOND COUNCIL

One hundred years after the first Council was presided over by the Venerable Kassapa a sad incident occurred in the town of Vesali. A large group of bhikkhus, called Vajjiputta, was formed and they caused a great sensation throughout Buddhist circles through their heretical beliefs. These beliefs numbered ten and included the drinking of the juice extracted from palmyra date, or cocoa palm, and the receiving or hoarding of money. These and many other acts prohibited in the Vinaya (Monastic Law) were then proclaimed by the group of Vajjiputta bhikkhus to have been allowed. This caused a great discordance and a great sensation among Buddhists – the laity as well as bhikkhus. The situation threatened to become increasingly worse as time went on and according to history Yasa Kakandakaputta, the chief bhikkhu of the orthodox members, was even bribed by the heretics. However, being no less holy than wise he turned away the heretic messengers and, with his clever instruction and explanations, was later successful in gathering a large number of followers, both bhikkhus and laity, against the Vajjiputta bhikkhus, who had by then been successful in winning over King Kalasoka of Magadha to their side. Under their

instigation the befooled king set about oppressing, by various means, those bhikkhus under the leadership of Venerable Yasa. But no sooner had the sovereign order been carried out than the King's sister, who was a bhikkhuni (the female form of bhikkhu), called Nandā, intervened and finally convinced her brother of his mistake. Seeing now what was right and what was wrong in the Buddha's doctrine, the king revoked his former orders, begged forgiveness of his holy sister and gave his support to the Venerable Yasa's group of bhikkhus and laity. The Venerable Yasa then held a general meeting of all the devoted bhikkhus and had a formal discussion regarding the wrongfulness of the Vajjiputta bhikkhus' ten heretical beliefs. After a process of thorough questioning, answering, reasoning and debate, the meeting came to its final resolution – that the heretics' claims were all wrong. In addition to this, all three Baskets of the Buddhist Canon were comprehensively discussed and carefully considered, in such a manner as had been done in the assembly of the first Council, one hundred years before. How great the task was can be seen in that it lasted for eight months; that is to say, for one month longer than the first Council.

The venue for this second Council was the town of Vesali. The Arahats, or Saints, participating were about seven hundred in number.

THE THIRD COUNCIL

So far as the second Council is concerned the Venerable Yasa and King Kalasoka may have been successful in maintaining the Message of the Buddha in its pristine purity, but the heretic Vajjiputta bhikkhus were in no way defeated. Nor were they discouraged from propagating their heretical beliefs to their followers as a counter-attack to the Venerable Yasa. Their competition proved to be successful, for there grew more and more discordance among Buddhists bhikkhus and the laity. Since there are always those who prefer whatever is convenient for themselves, and others who respect what is good and right over that which is merely convenient, the quarrels between the two groups became more and more bitter. So much so, in fact, that the bhikkhus of the one group would refuse to perform religious rites and functions with those of the other group. This was equivalent to asserting that the Bhikkbus of the other group were no longer bhikkhus in the ecclesiastical sense and were, consequently, as good as laymen. Thus, Buddhism was at this time, i.e. 218 years after the Buddha's death, rent by discord in two hostile schools, viz. the Theravāda and the Acāriyavāda. The former represented those who still respected the words of the Theras, or Elders, such as the Venerable Yasa of the second Council, whereas the latter represented those who still clung to the teachings of the Vajjiputta bhikkhus. We also learn more of this unhappy incident from some historians, who say that each of the two schools were further subdivided into several different and antagonistic sects, numbering altogether eight-

een. This shows that at that time it would have been almost beyond hope for any well-wisher to improve the situation of Buddhism. In this critical moment, the need was keenly felt for the appearance of a strong figure.

In a Buddhist text called *Mahāvamsa*, however, it was written that the heretics, being deprived of the usual offerings and honour of the King's devotion to Buddhism, had masqueraded as Buddhist bhikkhus and then taken the opportunity to preach and practise their former doctrines. Of course, there was no surer way of destroying a doctrine than by doing so and in the course of time, when this infidel movement became known to the righteous group of bhikkhus, it inevitably gave birth to bitter contempt on the part of the pious Buddhists who were not so befooled. When this became known to King Asoka a general meeting of bhikkhus was formally held in which there was a close scrutiny of the behaviour and ideals of the individual bhikkhu. This Council, held under the auspices of the great and pious King Asoka, was presided over by the Holy Thera Tissa Moggalliputta, who was well versed in the Master's doctrine. Any bhikkhus who were found to be holding to heretical beliefs and practising infidel methods were disrobed, until it was reasonably believed that there were no more of any such defilements left in the doctrine.

After this monastic purgation the holy Tissa was then invited to once again call a meeting of the righteous and well versed bhikkhus, for the sake of reviewing and restandardizing it – as in the previous Councils of the

Master's doctrine – so that it could be correctly handed down in all its simplicity and nobility. For this purpose the Arama (or monastery) of Asoka, in the town of Pataliputta, was presented to the holy ones as the place of choice. About one thousand bhikkhus were summoned to participate in this Council, which lasted nine months, during which King Asoka, as had the previous kings of the first and second Councils, always provided great support. This event took place in the two hundred and eighteenth year after the Buddha's passing away.

It has been rightly said that those who undertook to carry on the third Council must have been more or less encouraged by the work of the previous Councils, and its success was therefore undoubtedly inspired by the previous achievements of their devoted predecessors. But a unique aspect of the success of the third Council, which seems to surpass the previous two, is that its missionary work was carried out on a far wider scale. Being an ardent missionary himself, after the Council King Asoka, through his own initiative, sent forth groups of self-sacrificing bhikkhus to various lands, carrying the torch of India's greatest son to illumine the four corners of the earth. Of these groups, one sent to Ceylon was conducted by the great king's son and daughter, who had been respectively ordained as bhikkhu and bhikkhuni. Others were sent abroad and overseas to various remote countries. The group which reached Thailand was known to have been conducted by the Venerables Sona and Uttara.

From the historians' viewpoint these three Councils, convened in India, were accepted as perfectly and rightly carried out. Subsequently there were several Councils held in various lands at different times, but all of these were local and sectarian Councils and not as universally regarded as being acceptable.

Chapter Two

Buddhism In Ancient Thailand

As has already been pointed out, a group of missionary bhikkhus was sent by King Asoka to the remote countries of the Indo-China Peninsula. This group was conducted by the Venerables Sona and Uttara. In the course of their journey by land from India they must have first passed Burma before going on to other south-eastern countries. In Thailand, the antiquities at the town of Nakhon Pathom, 50 kilometres west of Bangkok, seem to give practical evidence as to where Buddhism first settled down. These include stone inscriptions, Buddha images, the Buddha's Footprints and the great Pagoda itself which, if stripped of its later-constructed top, would be of the same design as the stupas of the great King Asoka at the town of Sanchi, in India.

It was at first doubtful as to how the missionary bhikkhus would have managed to make themselves understood by the people of the places they landed at or reached. But in the case of the two holy ones who arrived in Thailand that time, it was rather fortunate for them that there had been Indian traders and refugees living all along the Malay and Indo-China Peninsulas. Some of these Indian tribes were known to have fled from Asoka's invasion before he was converted to Buddhism by the horrors of

war. Therefore it is not without reason to say that the first preaching of the Message would at first have been among the Indian themselves and then, through these Indian interpreters, to the people of the country, who at that time are supposed to have been a racial stock of people known as the Mon-Khmers and Lawas.

THE FU-NAN PERIOD

We have learnt how Buddhism prospered in the Indo-China Peninsula, which to some extent may rightly be called Suvannabhumi (lit. the Golden Land). The inhabitants of this region at the time, however, were supposed to be the Mon-Khmers and 'Lawa', whose superiors, or rulers, were either the Indians themselves or of Indian blood or lineage by marriage. From this fact it was certain that Indian culture and civilization were prevailing all over the land. Thus, with the exclusion of the north-east, which is now the northern part of Vietnam, Theravāda Buddhism had spread all over the Indo-China Peninsula and when, in course of time, the Burmese and the Thais evacuated from Tibet and Yunnan, they were also impressed with Buddhism and later on adopted it as their religion.

With the rise of the Mahāyāna school in India in the sixth century B.E., missionaries were sent abroad both by sea and by land. Travelling by land they made their journey through Bengal and Burma, while on their sea voyages they first landed on the Malay Peninsula and in Sumatra, from whence they made the second part of their voyage

to Cambodia. Also during this time there arose a 'Fu-Nan' or Phanom Kingdom, covering the land of Cambodia and also the north-eastern and central areas of Thailand. The people of this Fu-Nan Kingdom are known to have professed the two schools of Buddhism, viz. Theravāda and Mahāyāna. So much so that in the tenth century B.E. some Fu-Nan bhikkhus were recorded as having gone forth to China for the purpose of studying and translating the Buddhist texts there. Of these courageous bhikkhus, the most well-known were Sanghapāla and Mandarasena.

But the Fu-Nan kingdom was, in the eleventh century B.E., on the decline and was eventually overrun and defeated by one of her own colonies, the Jen-La Kingdom. This also brought about a halt, if not a deterioration, in the progress of Buddhism in this land.

THE DVĀRAVATĪ PERIOD

During the eleventh century B.E., when Buddhism was more or less affected by the decline of the Fu-Nan Kingdom the Mons, who lived in the territory of Chao Phya River, took the opportunity to declare themselves independent and build up the 'Dvāravatī' kingdom. Due to its once having been a seat of culture and civilization, the new kingdom made rapid progress in the arts and religion. It was also unique in maintaining and strictly observing the doctrine of Theravāda Buddhism learned from one of Asoka's missionary groups. Since it had close contact with the Indians of the Ganges, Buddhist art of this period was very much like that of the Kupta dynasty

of India. The capital, or centre of the Dvāravatī Kingdom must have been in the present town of Nakhon Pathom. But in the following, i.e. the twelfth, century B.E. the kingdom extended upwards – firstly to the town of Lop Buri and then to the northern provinces of Thailand. One evidence of this fact was that Queen Cāmadevī, who was a Mon of the Dvāravatī period, became the ruler of the town of Haribhunjaya, or the present town of Lamphun (some 700 kilometres north of Bangkok) and had invited 500 bhikkhus, all well-versed in the Canon, to preach their doctrine to her people. This was one reason why the Theravāda Buddhism of Dvāravatī had gained ground in the northern provinces of Thailand at that time. (It was also then in the possession of the Thais evacuating from Yunnan.) The Mons' domination over the northern region lasted for many centuries and inscriptions in ancient Mon characters can be found from the town of Nakhon Pathom up to Lop Buri and Lamphun.

In the fourteenth century B.E. the Jen-La kingdom was replaced by the ancient Khmer (Cambodian) kingdom, which also expanded its territory into some parts of the Dvāravatī Kingdom, with the exclusion of the latter's north and north-eastern provinces.

THE SRĪVIJAYA PERIOD

During the time the Dvāravatī kingdom was still flourishing there were in the south of Thailand several states, two of which, as mentioned in the Chinese record, were Siah-Tho (Red Earth) and Phan Phan. The former was situat-

ed somewhere near the state of Sai Buri, in the Federated Malay States (some archaeologists also confirm that this state was somewhere near the town of Madrid in Burma). Its people professed Buddhism. The latter town was what is now Surat Thani in Thailand (some 650 kilometres south of Bangkok). Its people were said to have accepted Theravāda Buddhism as their faith. These states used to have close communications with the Dvāravatī. In the twelfth century B.E. there arose in Sumatra a Srīvijaya kingdom, whose dominating power and territory, extending to the Malay Peninsula, was bordered by that of the Dvāravatī kingdom. In these states during this time, however, Sāvakayana Buddhism, according to the Chinese missionary E-Ching's record, was still flourishing, since their rulers and people firmly adhered to the rules and the practices of the doctrine. But when the Pala dynasty of Magadha-Bengal began its rise to power, Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially the Mantarayāna sect, was energetically patronized, and since the country also came into contact with the equally mighty kingdom of Srīvijaya, now in control of the southern seas and the Malay Peninsula, the Mahāyāna sect was accepted by the Srīvijaya kingdom as their faith for the next five hundred years. Evidence of this may be found in that in the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat, which was then known as Tam-Bara-Link, there is a rock inscription in Sanskrit characters dated as far back as B.E. 1318 (715 A.D.), mentioning the suzerainty of a Srīvijaya king. Also, in the fifteenth century B.E., there was mentioned a great religious teacher of Tibet, called Dīpankara Atisa, who for 12 years had his residence at the Dhamma-Kirti in Sumatra. Next to these

can be seen the Vihara of Borobudur in Java, of which there is now no further question regarding the greatness of its constructor. Especially in Thailand, several places of worship, such as the pagoda or Chedi enshrining the Buddha relics at the town of Chaiya and the innermost Chedi within the Ceylonese style Chedi at the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat are, among many others, undeniable evidences of Srīvijaya influence accompanied by the Mahāyāna Buddhism of those days.

These evidences, along with several others, tell us that there were two periods when Srīvijaya influence was spread overseas to the land of Kam-Bhoo-Ja (Cambodia) and to her colonies in the present Chao Phya River territory. The first period was in the thirteenth century B.E., whereas the second one was in the middle of the sixteenth century. King Suriya Varaman the First (B.E. 1546-1592) of Cambodia was also of Srīvijaya lineage and this was the reason why Mahāyāna culture once flourished in the countries of Thailand and Cambodia from the thirteenth century B.E.

THE LOP BURI PERIOD

The period of the fifteenth to the eighteenth century B.E., when Cambodian influence was predominant in Thailand, was called the Lop Buri period. Some of these Cambodian kings, however, were Buddhists while others were Brahmanists. As for the Buddhism then prevailing, there were mentioned both Theravāda and Mahāyāna: the former not so ardently supported as the latter, since

most Kings were inspired by Mahāyāna Buddhism, which had struck firm roots in this soil since the Fu-Nan period. Though it was on the decline for some time during the Dvāravatī period, it was subsequent to the decline of the Dvāravatī kingdom that the Mantarayāna sect of the Mahāyāna School was adopted from Srīvijaya and quickly became the dominating power in Cambodia and in some parts of Thailand, such as in the central plains and the north-eastern tableland. The well-known rock temple at the town of Phimai (on the north-eastern tableland) bears evidence of the dominating power of this Mahāyāna sect. This is supposed to have been built in the sixteenth century B.E., while the triple 'prang' (a kind of pagoda) at Lop Buri was also known to be dedicated to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Besides, a countless number of Buddha amulets were found in several towns of Thailand, such as in the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat (some 800 kilometres south of Bangkok), Lop Buri, Suphan Buri and Sawankhalok (some 500 kilometres north of Bangkok). These were all made according to the belief of Mantarayāna Buddhism, which was later on the breeding ground of a sort of 'black' magic that was added to the corpus of Buddhism in neighbouring countries as well as in Thailand.

Chapter Three

Buddhism In The Thai Kingdom

Buddhism as a movement in Thailand had always undergone development and dealt with various obstacles according to the situation of the country that patronized it. Generally speaking, when a country is peaceful and safe from outside enemies, the Buddha light is aglow and the study and practice of Buddhism is always encouraged by the public as well as by the king or rulers. But when a country is in decline, although the spirit of Buddhism – the Buddha light within – may still be shining in the hearts of the people, Buddhism as a movement is inevitably more or less affected. The teaching of the history of Buddhism in Thailand therefore, is not possible without referring to the periods when each dynasty ruled over the country and when the capital was moved generally southward, for the sake of security and in search of a better, more productive land.

THE AI-LAO PERIOD

The 'Ai-Lao' kingdom of the Thais, in the province of Yunnan, so far as we learn from history, was founded in the fifth century B.E. and in the following century Buddhism was believed to have reached China. Meanwhile, one of the Thai kings of the Ai-Lao, called Khun Luang Mao,

(there were at that time several independent tribes of the Thais) was known to have formally declared himself as a Buddhist. This was the first Thai ruler to make himself known as an upholder of Buddhism, which was presumably Sāvakayāna rather than Mahāyāna; but whether or not it was really the Theravāda school is still an unsettled question. (The Sāvakayāna was – according to its history in Pāli and Sanskrit texts – subdivided into eighteen smaller groups.)

THE NAN-CHAO PERIOD

Towards the close of the seventh century B.E. the Thais, in constant conflict with the Chinese, chose to migrate southwards to the Indo-China Peninsula. Then there arose a Thai King whose name was Pi-lok, who founded the Nan-Chao Kingdom, which lasted five centuries, with its capital at the town of Ta-Li-Foo. It was during this time that Mahāyāna Buddhism, upheld by the Tang dynasty of China, was also believed to have flourished in Thailand. One of the tributes paid to a king of the Sung dynasty was known to be a text of the *Vajra Prajna-Paramita* sutra which, of course, was definitively of Mahāyāna origin.

But in the following century (the eighteenth) the Nan-Chao Kingdom was overrun by Kublaikhan's army. This was the cause of further migration southward of the free-spirited Thais and they consequently came into contact with those of their compatriots who had previously settled in the Indo-China Peninsula.

THE CHIANG SAEN PERIOD

The Chiang Saen or Yo-Nok (16th-21st century B.E.) was founded in the sixteenth century B.E. by Thais migrating from their Ai-Lao kingdom. They seemed, however, to have at this time a more cosmopolitan outlook in their religious beliefs, for while some were known still to be ardent supporters of the Buddhism of their former kingdom (Ai-Lao), others adhered strongly to the Theravāda of the Mons, others to the Mahāyāna of Cambodia and still others to the Mahāyāna of the Nan-Chao kingdom. But in the course of time, some parts of the kingdom were under the suzerainty of the Burmese, who had been used to adopting and re-adopting the various faiths that reached their land. They, as well as the Thais, first professed the Theravāda Buddhism of the Mons and then changed to the Mantarayāna sect of the Mahāyāna school, which reached Burma from Bengal in India. Then, in the sixteenth century B.E., when King Anoradha of Burma re-adopted the former Theravāda as his faith, the seat of Buddhism was at the town of Phu-Kam (or Pagan), where Theravāda Buddhism had had its golden days. This led to a misunderstanding by some historians, who concluded that the Buddhism then belonged to another system of thought and practice and therefore incorrectly named it 'Theravāda of the Pagan Style'. In fact, it was none other than the former School of the Mons, which had once been on the decline and was afterwards revived during the great King Anoradha's reign.

Due to the efforts of his mighty forces the north-western part of Thailand and some of the towns on the Chao Phya River were also under his power. The town of Nakhon Pathom was also overrun during his reign. Thus, Theravāda Buddhism also gained ground in these parts of the land, but owing to their being so accustomed to their former practices, Mahāyāna Buddhism was still firmly adhered to by those who had once been under Cambodian power.

THE LANKAVAMSA (CEYLON) PERIOD

In the seventeenth century B.E. there reigned in Ceylon a great king, whose name was Parakkamabahu. Being himself a devoted follower of the Buddha, he had dedicated much of his personal property and his own happiness to the promotion of Buddhism in his land. His unique achievement was that he had managed to unite the bhikkhus of various sects who had some minor doctrinal differences and also had them convene a Council of well-versed Theras (or Elders) for the sake of settling on the contents of the three Baskets of the Buddhist Canon, as had been done previously in Ceylon and India. Due to the success of this Council, the Pāli language was once again revised and proclaimed as the formal language for the research and study of Buddhism. His fame having spread far and wide to foreign lands, several Buddhist countries, such as Burma and Thailand, then sent out groups of bhikkhus to further their study of Buddhism in Ceylon. Seeing with their own eyes how the Ceylonese bhikkhus were well-behaved and well-grounded in their

doctrinal beliefs, most of these bhikkhus were strongly impressed and took the opportunity to remain in Ceylon to thoroughly study the Master's teachings. For this purpose these foreign bhikkhus were re-ordained in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Ceylonese bhikkhus. On their return, they brought to their homeland those refined manners, well-grounded beliefs and aspects of Ceylonese culture which made no less an impression upon their people than it had on themselves. More young men left their homes for the homeless life of a bhikkhu and the Ceylonese religious culture from that time took root in various countries, such as Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

In Thailand it was about the time of the Sukhothai Period (B.E. 1800) that the Ceylonese culture was adopted. It is believed that there were also some Ceylonese bhikkhus accompanying the Thai bhikkhus on their homeward journey. They must have landed first at the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat (some 800 km south of Bangkok) and heralded the new culture there. When, as before, their fame was known far and near, it later reached the town of Sukhothai (some 500 km north of Bangkok), then the capital of Thailand. The great King Ramkamhaeng, being himself a devout Buddhist, was delighted at the news and sent messengers to invite the group of 'Lankavamsa' bhikkhus to preach their doctrine at Sukhothai, promising them every help and convenience. We learn from inscriptions that through these Ceylonese bhikkhus from Nakhon Si Thammarat he was also well-versed in the Buddhist Canon and whatever lessons in morality he

taught his people, they were always backed by his own example.

Thus, with the rise of Ceylonese Buddhist culture under the devoted king's patronage came the decline of the once flourishing school of Mahāyāna. This was undoubtedly due to doctrinal as well as disciplinary differences in the several major practices and ideals. The former Theravāda school, not differing widely in spirit and modes of practice held its ground for the time being, but finally had to give way and assimilate itself with the more influential Lankavamsa party.

Obviously this movement bears a paramount and lasting influence upon the Buddhist disciplinary practice from then to the present time. One practical evidence to be seen even today is that around the Uposatha, or the main shrine of several Aramas or temples, both in the Sukhothai and the Chakri (the present dynasty) period there can be found sets of two, or even three, boundary stones set up within an arched stone canopy. This was possibly because of an aversion on the part of the Ceylonese bhikkhus to performing religious rites within the former boundary stone which, to them, might not have been correctly built or formally erected in strict accordance with the disciplinary rules. Therefore they had one, or even two more, built and formally erected according to their own standard of belief. That most of the royal Aramas or temples in Bangkok today can be seen with two or three blocks of boundary stones is evidence of how deep-

rooted were the establishment of Lankavamsa ideals in Thailand.

THE SUKHOTHAI PERIOD

The eighteenth century B.E. saw the decline of Cambodian power, which paved the way firstly for the independence of the Thais and then to the establishment of the Sukhothai kingdom by the free Thais under the leadership of Poh-Khun (Lord or chief) Intrathit and Ban Muang. The people of Sukhothai professed Buddhism, both Mahāyāna and Theravāda, while those of the north-east and of Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south, being independent of Sukhothai, adhered firmly to Theravāda. In the reign of the great King Ramkamhaeng, third king of the Sukhothai lineage, the kingdom was greatly extended as far north as the town of Luang Phra Bang and as far south as the Malay Peninsula. In the East it was bordered by the river Mae Khong and in the west it annexed the whole of the Mon kingdom. The flood of Srīvijaya power was now ebbing, due to the downward press of the Thais together with the upward press of Java. And, just as before, with the ebbing away of military power came the decline of its accepted faith. Thus, it was now the turn of Theravāda to gain spiritual power over the people, whereas the Mahāyāna sects of Cambodia and Srīvijaya, having once risen to power together, would now share equally their declining days.

Now that the Lankavamsa Buddhism was well patronized by King Ramkamhaeng of the Sukhothai dynasty, it

finally dominated the existing beliefs of the Theravāda and Mahāyāna. Sanskrit, the language held sacred by the Mahāyanists, was accordingly replaced by Pāli, the sacred language of the Theravādins and the Lankavamsa. The study of Pāli was certainly at that time greatly enhanced – so much so that one of the later kings of the Sukhothai dynasty, called Phya Lithai, was counted among well-known Pāli Scholars as one who was widely famed for his experience in Buddhist study and devotion to its way of life. He had also crystallized his research into the form of a book called, in Thai, *Triphoom Phra Ruang*, which is considered to be the earliest manuscript of Thailand. Its index and bibliography tell us how extensive his research was and how well-known he was among Buddhist scholars of that time. From a book by a lady called Nophamas, presumably one of the lesser queens of the Sukhothai kings, there were ample evidences of how Buddhism was at that time flourishing – both in study and in practice.

One of the stone inscriptions (B.E. 1835) from the reign of the great King Ramkamhaeng tells us further that the Buddhist hierarchy of Ceylon was also adopted in Thailand. In another inscription (B.E. 1904) from the reign of the later King Lithai of Sukhothai there was mentioned a partriarch of Ceylon, Mahā Swāmī, being invited to be the partiarch Mahā Sangha Rāja of Thailand. Also in his reign it was recorded that the bhikkhus were divided into two groups, viz. the Gāmavāsī – those living together within the towns (or villages) and the Araññavāsī – those living alone in the forest. This system must have originated from the two aspects of the study of

Buddhism in the scriptures, viz. Ganthadhura – the business of learning (or book-studying) and Vipassanādhura – the business of practising or meditating for the development of Insight. These two categories of bhikkhus, though not formally divided, may actually still be seen, even in the present time.

Throughout the Sukhothai period Buddhism had played a very important role as the foundation of culture, architecture and Buddha image construction, some evidences of which may be seen in the exquisite worksmanship displayed in the images of the Buddha, called Jinaraj, in the grand temple of Phitsanulok, 400 kilometres north of Bangkok and Jinasri, in the temple of Pavaranivesa in Bangkok. The star of the Sukhothai, however, had by then risen for one hundred and twenty years and from that time it began to gradually fall, until the kingdom was finally annexed to Ayutthaya.

THE CHIANG MAI PERIOD

While one of the Thai tribes of the Chao Phya River was founding the Sukhothai kingdom, another tribe in the north-western tableland, called Lannā, was also successful in driving out the Mon influence from the river Ping. In the nineteenth century B.E. King Meng-Rai, of the ancient Chiang San dynasty, was known to have defeated King Ye-Ba, the Mon king of the town of Lamphun, and later built his capital at Chiang Mai. During this time the Theravāda Buddhism of Ceylon had been brought from its flourishing states in the Mon country and in Sukhothai

to the north-western tableland, but was not able to take firm root there. In the twentieth century B.E., through the royal order of King Kue-Na, several Lankavamsa bhikkhus, both from Moulmein (Mau-Ta-Ma) and from Sukhothai, were invited to Chiang Mai (750 km north of Bangkok) to preach their doctrine. Of these bhikkhus, along with their followers one, named Ananda, was from the town of Mau-Ta-Ma in the Mon country and the other, called Sumana, was from Sukhothai.

In the following century (B.E. 2020) under the auspices of King Tilokaraj the Thirteenth of the Chiang Mai dynasty and under the leadership of Dharmadinna Thera, a general Council of Bhikkhus, which lasted one year, was convened at the Mahā Bodhivamsa Vihāra. Practically, this was the first Council held in Thailand and reflected the intensive study of Buddhism during that time. A collection of Pāli texts compiled by the Theras of that glorious age were now prized by those who wished to further their research of Buddhism in the Pāli language. Some of these texts were: *Abhidhammayojanā*, *Mūlakaccāyanayojanā*, *Vinayayojanā*, *Vessantaradīpanī* and *Mangalatthadīpanī*. In the following (twenty-second) century Chiang Mai was taken by the Burmese and from that time on it became an unhappy town, alternately torn by two superior powers, i.e. Burma to her north and the kingdom of Ayutthaya to her south.

THE AYUTTHAYA PERIOD

Towards the close of the nineteenth century B.E., which witnessed the decline of the Sukhothai kingdom, King U-thong of Suphannaphum, once under Sukhothai domination, proclaimed his state as independent of Sukhothai power and built up his capital at a town called Si Ayutthaya, south of Sukhothai. This kingdom, which lasted for 411 years, was ruled over by 33 kings.

After more than four centuries comprising the age of the Ayutthaya kingdom, Theravāda Buddhism in Thailand seemed to have reached its zenith of popularity. Within and without the city of Ayutthaya there were scattered innumerable temples and pagodas, which served as places of education, hospitals and general meeting places, thereby exerting a great influence on the spiritual life of the people. Buddhist art, both in the field of architecture and in Buddha image construction, flourished. An illustrative example of this fact may be seen today in the Temple of the Footprints at Saraburi. There was also a tradition, which is still in practice today, for every young Thai man to be ordained at least once as a bhikkhu. Several kings, including Phra Borom Trai Lokanatha, the eighth king, in following the example set by King Lithai of the Sukhothai period, temporarily renounced the throne to be ordained as bhikkhus.

During the reign of Phra Borom-Kote, the thirty-first king of the Ayutthaya kingdom, there reigned in Ceylon a king named Kitti-Siri-Raj-Singha who, being discouraged by

the decline of Buddhism in his island country and learning that the Buddhism of Thailand was purer than that of any other country, sent forth his religious embassy to the Thai king asking, as a favour, for some Thai bhikkhus to revive the spirit of Theravāda Buddhism, which had almost died out in his land. This was a good occasion, enabling Thailand to repay her debt to Ceylon and the Venerable Upali, together with his followers, was sent to Ceylon. Thus, the community of Ceylonese bhikkhus ordained then by the Thai bhikkhus has ever since been called Upali-Vamsa or Siam-Vamsa. It is a well-known and highly revered sect in Ceylon.

The religious literature of Ayutthaya abounded in both Pāli and Thai languages, but most of it was most regrettably destroyed when the kingdom was ruthlessly overrun by the enemy in B.E. 2310 (1767 A.D.).

THE THON BURI PERIOD

There is not much to say about Buddhism in the short-lived Thon Buri period (B.E. 2310-2325 or 1767-1782 A.D.). During the prelude of fifteen years, a greater part of which was occupied in driving out the enemy and restoring the peaceful situation of the country, what could be done was merely a general revival of Buddhism and the compiling of new texts and other measures for the propagation of Buddhism. During his reign King Thon Buri had several temples repaired, monastic rules settled, religious texts collected and the study and practice of Buddhism revived to some degree. With regard

to such texts as the Tripiṭaka, the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries, which had been destroyed by fire, he had them borrowed or copied from those of neighbouring countries, such as Cambodia. However, it is safe to say that Theravāda Buddhism – in the form of that of the Ayutthaya period – still prevailed in the Thon Buri period.

THE RATANAKOSIN (OR BANGKOK) PERIOD

King Rama I

The reign of King Rama I of the Chakri dynasty began in the year B.E. 2325, with the town of Bangkok as its capital. Although there were some wars with outward enemies, he often managed to find time to encourage the study and practice of Buddhism. Numerous temples, both inside and outside the capital, were repaired. Of these temples, the Jetuvana Vihara (or Wat Pho, in the vernacular), which ranks among the most important, had undergone seven years of repair and the well-known Wat-Phra-Keo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha), which is regarded as the most important temple in Thailand, was also built during his reign. From the deserted northern provinces, such as from Sukhothai, a number of Buddha images (about two thousand in all) were brought in order to be preserved and enshrined in the Uposatha of various temples in Bangkok.

In B.E. 2331 a Council of Bhikkhus was convened for the sake of – as before – settling on the contents of

the Tripiṭaka and having those chosen passages written down with styluses in books made of corypha palm leaves. Such books were numbered 345 in all, i.e. 80 for the Vinaya, 160 for the Suttas, 61 for the Abhidhamma and 53 for the Saddavisesa texts. The Council, held at the present Wat Mahadhat under the chairmanship of a Supreme Patriarch (whose name was Sri), lasted five months. The participants were 218 bhikkhus, together with 32 lay scholars. This was the second council held in Thailand.

Religious literature during King Rama I's reign was compiled both in Pāli and in Thai. Of these, one work – a Pāli treatise called *Sangitiyavamsa* – was written by Somdech Phra Vanarat of Jetuvana Temple.

King Rama II

King Rama II, formerly called Phra Buddha Lert Lah, came to the throne in B.E. 2352. Buddhist activities during his time were notable in sending a religious goodwill mission group to Ceylon and organizing the research and study of Buddhism. It was during this time that the course for studying Buddhism in Pāli language was divided into nine grades, such as had once been done in the Ayutthaya period. Other activities included the repairing of existing temples and the building of new ones. The latter included the Prang of Wat Arun (Temple of the Dawn), symbolic of Thailand for all foreigners.

King Rama III

Phra Nang Klao, the third of the Chakri dynasty, succeeded his father in B.E. 2367. Having a natural bent for architecture, besides being a pious king himself, he had more temples built, both inside and outside Bangkok. The temple of Jetuvana, in the reign of King Rama I, became a treasury of religious knowledge for Buddhist scholars and the symbolic 'Prang' of Bangkok was completed to perfection in his reign. Also, two groups of goodwill missionary bhikkhus, one after the other, were sent to Ceylon. His piety in Buddhism may be seen in his pioneer undertaking to translate the Pāli Tripiṭaka and some other Pāli texts into Thai. However, his reign came to an end before this was completed.

In B.E. 2372 there was a religious movement which marked a cornerstone for the study and practice of Buddhism in Thailand – the birth of the Dhammayutta group of bhikkhus. This was due to Prince Monkut, the King's younger brother, who had been ordained as a bhikkhu for 27 years. Through this long period of seclusion he was endowed with a thorough knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures, including the Tripiṭaka, its commentaries, subcommentaries and other Pāli texts as well. With such a wealth of knowledge, gained and digested as a result of long and profound thinking, he was able to distinguish more clearly between what was right and what was wrong in the Master's doctrine. He then set about putting into practise what was mentioned and regarded as righteous in the Tripiṭaka. By doing so, he unwittingly

made a great impression on those who, inspired by his conduct, took it upon themselves to follow his way of life. This group of people, in course of time, grew bigger and more popular, eventually becoming a separate gathering of bhikkhus called the Dhammayutta group, as distinct from the former group, which was called the Mahānikāya. Thus, since that time there have been two groups of bhikkhus in Thailand. Besides being proficient in religious knowledge, Prince Monkut also had a good command of Sanskrit and English, and his act of establishing the Dhammayutta group of bhikkhus might be compared with that of the Venerable Rahula Thera who, through his exemplary mode of practice, had founded the Lankavamsa group of bhikkhus at the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat (some 800 kilometres south of Bangkok).

One example of Thai religious literature was the *Pathom-Som-Bodhi-Kathā* (Life of Buddha), compiled by the Supreme Patriarch Prince Paramanujit Jinorasa of Jetuvana Temple. Of the works in Pāli one, called *Simā Vicarāna* (Treatise on the Sīmā, or boundary, of a main shrine) and compiled by Prince Monkut himself, has won high respect in Ceylon.

King Rama IV

King Rama IV, or Prince Monkut, who was obliged to disrobe after his brother's passing away, came to the throne in B.E. 2394. He was formally known as Phra Chom Klao. During his reign, bhikkhus were greatly encouraged in their study and practice of Buddhism, so that they were

well-behaved as well as well-educated in the Buddha's doctrine. Some rules and regulations for the betterment of the administration of the community of bhikkhus as a whole were laid down; a number of religious goodwill missions was sent forth to Ceylon; and the community of Dhammayutta bhikkhus was also established in Cambodia.

Never was the construction work neglected. The Raj-Pra-Dit Temple, one of the most important temples in Bangkok, is evidence of this fact. The greatest and highest chedi, or pagoda, of Nakhon Pathom, called the Pathom Chedi – second to none in its design and decorations – also bears witness to his constructive genius and serves to remind the Thai people of its historical importance.

As a result of much earnest study in Buddhism there were now more books in the Thai language expounding the tenets of the Buddha's doctrine. This movement opened up a new trend of modern thought in its dissemination of the Dhamma to the people on a broader scale, instead of – as formerly – seeming more to monopolise it for the realization of a minority 'intelligentsia'. Of the Pāli literature, a volume by the Supreme Patriarch Prince Pavares Variyalongkorn, named *Sugatavidatthividhāna* is the most important of its time.

King Rama V

The reign of King Rama V, formerly called Phra Chula Chom Klao, began in the year B.E. 2411 and lasted 42

years. He was also one of the few monarchs who temporarily renounced his throne after his coronation in order to be ordained as a bhikkhu. This was because most of the Thai kings since the Ayutthaya period were customarily ordained before the coronation day.

Being no less devoted to Buddhism than his predecessors, he managed to found two Buddhist Universities with the aim of increasing the progress and stability of Buddhist education.

These two were Mahāmakuta Rāja Vidyālaya and Mahaculalongkorn Raja Vidyalaya, each of which have played a very important role in the field of Buddhist study. He also enacted a law concerning the administrative system of the community of bhikkhus, declaring that the Buddhist Church should be a self-governing, holy community, while the state would be the patron under the direction and for the welfare of the Church. Another of the major construction works was Wat Benjamabophit, which is well-known among foreigners for its impressive Buddha image in the Uposatha.

In B.E. 2431 a Council of Bhikkhus, under the chairmanship of the Supreme Patriarch Prince Pavares Variyalongkorn, was held for the purpose of transliterating the existing Tripiṭaka from the palm-leaf books with their Cambodian characters to printed books using Thai characters. This required 39 printed volumes for each set of the entire Tripiṭaka. Besides the Message itself, some Commentaries and other Pāli texts were also

transliterated from Cambodian to Thai characters and then printed in the form of paper books.

One of the king's elements of religious success, however, undoubtedly comes from the zealous efforts of one of his great helpers. This was none other than his own half-brother, the Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañānavarorasa, who had a profound knowledge of English as well as Pāli and Sanskrit. Thus, by virtue of his ability and his high position (as the king's brother and as chief of the whole community of bhikkhus) the theoretical and practical sides of Buddhism under the far-sighted and able patriarch were greatly encouraged. Most of his noble works are even now studied by the public as well as by students, and it is no overstatement to say that he blazed a trail for modern thought in the study and practice of Buddhism.

In B.E. 2431 (1894) the Mahāmakuta Rāja Vidyālaya, one of the two Buddhist Universities, published a religious periodical, called *Dharma Cakshu*, which has now reached its 86th anniversary and is, therefore, the oldest and most long-lived religious periodical in Thailand.

King Rama VI

King Rama VI, the poet and philosopher formally known as Phra Monkut Klao, ascended the throne in B.E. 2453 (1910). In order to imbue the spirit of Buddhism into the minds of his citizens without any distinction of position, profession or sex, he organized a new branch of Buddhist studies in the Thai language. This was successfully done

because there had been several texts on Buddhism compiled in the reign of his royal father, together with many writers during his own reign (mostly by the Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañānavarorasa). He himself never neglected to do so, and thus there were written many religious books which were both instructive and understandable by all. His wealth of religious literature included such books as *Addresses to Scouts* and *What did the Buddha Realize?* So it could be said that the study of Buddhism was now accessible to all, whether they knew Pāli or not, whether they wanted to study it for a long time or within a limited period of time and whether they were male or female. For those with a limited time for studying, it was advised that they should study Buddhism from the texts written in Thai. If they were ordained as a bhikkhu or sāmanera (novice), they were called 'Nak Dhamma' (Dham-miko – the Dhamma student). The (almost) same course for lay men or women was called 'Dhamma-Suksa' – (Dhamma-Sikkha – Dhamma student).

As regards the transliteration work done in the reign of King Rama V, more commentaries, sub-commentaries, Tīkā, and other Pāli works were transliterated during his reign.

King Rama VII

Phra Pok Klao, or King Rama VII, came to the throne in B.E. 2468 (1923). Besides preserving all the movements for the promotion of Buddhism as King Rama VI had done, he also had a Council of Bhikkhus convened

under the chairmanship of the Supreme Patriarch Prince Jinavara Sirivatthana, for the sake of revising and checking the contents of the 39 Tripiṭaka volumes printed in the reign of King Rama V with the Tripiṭakas from Ceylon, Burma, Europe and Cambodia. Then a reprint was done. This time the contents were divided into 45 volumes, of which 8 were the Vinaya, 25 the Suttanta and 12 were Abhidhamma. All these were printed in B.E. 2410 (1927). This new set of Tripiṭaka was called the *Siam-Rath Edition*.

King Rama VIII

King Rama VIII, or King Ananda Mahidol, succeeded King Rama VII in the year B.E. 2477 (1934). The administrative system for the community of bhikkhus was altered during this time in compliance with that for the State, so that there were ecclesiastical ministers and a prime minister. More of this alteration will be dealt with under the heading ‘Administrative System for the Community of Thai Bhikkhus’ in the following pages.

Of the events worth mentioning, one was the construction of Wat Phra Sri Mahadhat by the Government and another was the study of Buddhism, which became more popular in neighbouring lands, such as in the Federated Malay States and Singapore.

King Rama IX

The reign of King Rama IX, formally called King Bhumibol, began in B.E. 2489 (1946).

A special hospital for bhikkhus was built and two Buddhist universities, in the real sense of university, were established. These two are Mahamakuta University, situated in the temple of Bovaranives, opened in B.E. 2489 (1946), and Mahachulalongkorn University, situated in the temple of Mahadhat, opened in B.E. 2490 (1947). These two Buddhist universities are actually managed by bhikkhus, with a subsidy from the Government and contributions from the public. Also studying in these universities are bhikkhus from neighbouring countries such as Laos and Cambodia. Up to the present day there have been several groups of graduated students. This is a good omen for Buddhism in this age of trouble and turmoil.

In B.E. 2499 (1956) King Bhumibol temporarily renounced the throne for the purpose of ordination. During this period as a bhikkhu he attentively studied Buddhism in its theoretical and practical sides. This moved the people to a general appreciation and rejoicing and on this occasion there was also an amnesty of many prisoners. The Supreme Patriarch was the Preceptor (Upajjāya) in this royal ceremony of ordination.

MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM IN THE RATANAKOSIN (OR BANGKOK) PERIOD

Mahāyāna Buddhism might have theoretically or nominally been lost from Thailand in the eighteenth century B.E., but all through this time some of its ideals have been adhered to practically and with some degree of sincerity by the general public. The general belief that

everybody is or can be a Buddha and that the king is a Boddhisatva (or future Buddha) – including the efficacy of charms and amulets that make a believer invulnerable to weapons and dangers and misfortunes – are evidence that the spirit of Mahāyāna still has some influence on the minds of the people.

Mahāyāna Buddhism came into Thailand for the first time with the Mantrayāna sect. Then, for the second time, Mahāyāna was introduced during the reign of King Thon Buri in the Ratanakosin period by refugees from Vietnam or Annam. Owing to a state of revolution in their country there were many noblemen and people who were immigrants from Annam. They later built a temple of their own. With a second wave of immigrants, two more Annam temples were built in Bangkok. In the reign of King Rama III, three more temples of Annam Buddhism, one in Bangkok and two in the country, were built by a third group of immigrants.

In the reign of King Rama V there came from China a Chinese bhikkhu who later became very popular among Thailand's ethnic Chinese. He built two Chinese temples, one in the countryside and the other in Bangkok, which was called, in Chinese, Leng Nei Yee, or Wat Mang Kon Kamalavas, which is the biggest Mahāyāna temple in Thailand. When ecclesiastical titles were given to the Chinese and Annam bhikkhus, he was one of those who was offered an honourable title. It should be noted, however, that Mahāyāna Buddhism in Thailand, introduced

by the Chinese and the Annam bhikkhus, belonged to the Sukhāvati sect.

Another progressive step of Chinese Buddhists during this reign was the building of another temple of their own – the first temple in Thailand that, due to the presence of Sīmā (formal boundary marks as prescibed in the Vinaya or Book of Discipline), can be used as a place wherein to perform the religious rite of ordination. This eliminated one of the previous problems of the requirement for a Chinese bhikkhu to be ordained from China. In addition to this there were also many Buddhist associations founded by the Chinese Buddhists for the purpose of propagating their Mahāyāna doctrine. Nevertheless, their propagation was practically restricted to their fellow-countrymen. This was possibly because the Mahāyāna bhikkhus are generally more relaxed in their behaviour and less educated in their study.

SOME PROPAGATION ACTIVITIES

It has been traditional for every wat or temple in Thailand to arrange for the delivery of a sermon four times a month. This is done on the Buddhist holy days called, in Thai, Wan Phra which, calculated from the lunar calendar, fall on full-moon day, the half-moon days (of the waxing moon and the waning moon) and the day before new moon day. In addition to this there was later arranged a sermon on Sunday which, like those on the four holy days, was broadcast from various radio stations. The days of the Buddhist events, such as Visakha Day, Māgha or All

Saints' day and the day of Rains Retreat, are proclaimed official holidays. On these days there is no killing whatsoever in any slaughter-house. There is also a department of religious affairs which is responsible for the welfare of bhikkhus and for the upholding of Buddhism (and other religions), for which purpose an annual subsidy from the Government is given. Bhikkhus who are well versed in the study and practice of Buddhism are offered a noble title by the king, according to their ability, and are also given some financial help by the government.

Practically every aspect of life requires a Buddhist ceremony or observance in one way or another. Birth, marriage, death and many other occasions in an individual's life, as well as state ceremonies, often require the participation of bhikkhus by chanting, delivering a sermon or in some other way. In every school, before beginning the morning lessons the pupils say their prayer to the Triple Gem (i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha), and the life of Buddha and his doctrine are among the compulsory subjects in the school curriculum. Also, for a long time there has been a tradition that every Thai youth must be ordained once as a bhikkhu for a Vassa (a rainy season, i.e. three months). It is all the better for him if he can remain a bhikkhu for longer than that – even for the rest of his life.

At present there are several Buddhist associations under the management of devoted lay adherents. Some of these are the Buddhist Association and the Young Buddhist Association of Thailand, both with affliated societies in

almost every town in the country. By the efforts of these associations programmes for a lecture, talk or discussion on the Dhamma are arranged for the public at regular intervals, in addition to the publication of their own periodical.

Thus it is an undeniable fact that the everyday life of a Thai, from the cradle to the grave, so to speak, together with his arts and crafts, literature, culture and other elements of his life, are all based upon and moulded by one common factor – the spirit of Buddhism.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE BUDDHIST CHURCH

In Thailand, before 1962 the head of the Buddhist Church was the Supreme Patriarch. The executive power was vested in the Council of Ecclesiastical Ministers, which to a great extent corresponded to the Cabinet Council of the State. For this Council there were 10 Ecclesiastical Ministers, including the Sangha Nayaka (Ecclesiastical Premier), four Ecclesiastical Ministers for Administration, Propagation, Education and Public Welfare, and four Ecclesiastical Deputy Ministers. The rest were Ecclesiastical Ministers without portfolio. This Ecclesiastical Council was composed of 45 bhikkhu members.

The State, so far as the administration of the Church was concerned, was divided into nine main regions, each with its own Ecclesiastical High Commissioner and his assistant; something like the State High Commissioner or Governor-general. Each region was further sub-

divided into provinces, each with its own leading bhikkhu, Ecclesiastical Commissioner or Governor with his assistant. Then there was a board of provincial committees, along with the board of provincial judges. Each province was divided into several Amphoe (or districts), which in turn were subdivided into several Tam-bon Communes. For each Amphoe and Tam-bon there was again a chief, together with his assistant and board of the Amphoe or Tam-bon committee. These administrative agents were all bhikkhus.

Since 1962, however, they have been under the administration of the Council of Elders, presided over by the Supreme Patriarch.

There were several grades of ecclesiastical titles or rank. In all of Thailand the estimated number of Buddhist Temples (of the Theravāda School) was 20,944; whereas that of students of Buddhism, laity as well as bhikkhus, was 184,436. Bhikkhus (including sāmaneras, or novices) numbered some 200,000. There were 12 Mahāyāna temples in B.E. 2500 (1957).

THE TWENTY-FIFTH BUDDHIST CENTURY

On the auspicious occasion of the twenty-fifth century B.E., Thailand has organized a nation-wide celebration from 12th-18th May in commemoration of one of greatest events for all Buddhists. Thus, for the glory of the longevity of Buddhism in spite of undermining influences, and for the sake of showing the

world how Thailand has firmly upheld Buddhism and how much the Thai people are impressed by the Master's teaching, there has been allocated as a sanctuary a piece of land, to be called Buddha-Monthon (Buddha's domain), wherein is erected a standing Buddha image 2,500 in. in height. In addition to this, the whole Tripiṭaka, or Three Baskets, of the Buddhist Canon has been translated into Thai; temples and places of worship all over the land are being repaired; 2,500 persons are to be ordained as bhikkhus, and an Amnesty Act has been passed; Buddhist activities, both on the part of bhikkhus and laity, such as those of the various Buddhist societies, are also being exhibited to the public; Buddhist literature and pieces of art will be displayed, and within the temporary pavillion in the midst of the Phra Meru Grounds, sermons are to be delivered, Parittas (instructive passages from the Sacred Books) chanted and food presented to 2,500 bhikkhus each day throughout the seven-day celebration. These are to be presided over by their Majesties the King and the Queen.

(from the booklet published by the Mahamakut Buddhist University in commemoration of the 2,500th anniversary of Buddhism.)

Chapter Four

The 25th Buddhist Century Celebration In Thailand (1957 A.D.)

The following are the details of the celebration of the 25th Buddhist Century, announced by the Organizing Committee:

The Celebration will be held for seven days from Sunday, May 12 to Saturday, May 18, B.E. 2500 at Phra Meru Grounds.

The festival consists of two categories of activities as follows:

I Ceremonies and Rites.

- **a** A nation-wide decoration and illumination of temples and government offices. Commercial firms and private individuals are also invited to participate in by decking out their premises and houses for the whole period of the celebration.

- **b** Observance of the five or eight Buddhist Precepts for the whole period of the celebration. The whole Buddhist population is urged to strictly observe either the five or the eight Buddhist Precepts

throughout the Holy week. Before this period the festival booklets containing an explanation of the meaning and importance of the Sila will be distributed.

c Mass Ordination of 2,500 men on May 12 and celebration of the ordination on May 18.

d Competition of drawings bearing on Lord Buddha's life story.

e Flower arrangement and Buddhist altar arrangement contest.

f Buddhist Art and literature display.

g Display of various versions of the Tripiṭaka and commentaries.

h Various forms of entertainment lasting for seven days. Special Radio Broadcasting and television programmes devoted to religious events.

i Before-noon food offering to 2,500 monks for three consecutive days.

j Issue of a commemorative medal.

k Issue of a commemorative postage stamp.

l Casting of Buddha images representing the replicas of the Walking Buddha to be installed at the

Buddhist Precinct. These images will be distributed to various provinces and amphoes.

m Invitation to representatives of all the Buddhist countries, organizations and associations to participate in the celebration. The invitations were sent out four months earlier.

Request of massages from the heads of Buddhist countries and from the heads of the Sangha in such countries.

n A nation-wide flourish of drums, gongs, bells, sirens and gun salute at 6.00 hours on the Visakha Day, May 13. This is to be followed by a mass taking of the vow to observe the eight Precepts, chanting, and dedication of the merits to all. All these rites will also be broadcast.

In the afternoon there is to be a motorcar procession of floats depicting the various episodes of Lord Buddha's life story. The procession starts from the Ministry of Culture and end at Phra Meru Ground.

Meanwhile Royal Thai Air Force aircraft will drop popped-rice and flowers.

At Phra Meru Ground a replica of the Walking Buddha at the Buddhist Precinct is to be installed

for public worship and a ceremonial pavillion set up with seating capacity for 10,000.

After the procession has arrived at the ceremonial pavillion there is to be a recital of religious stanzas followed by the reading of messages from the various heads of states and the Sanghas of various Buddhist countries.

o A water procession on May 14.

p Daily administering of the Buddhist Precepts and recital of religious stanzas in which 2,500 servicemen from the three armed forces, policemen, government officials, students and members of the public will daily participate.

At night there is to be a ceremony of circumambulation with candles around the presiding image and a fireworks display.

q Royal pardon to prisoners.

r Promulgation of the Act fixing certain forests as wild animal sanctuaries and prohibiting shooting of game and fishing on temple grounds.

s Nation-wide abstinence, and abstention from the taking of animals' lives, from May 12 to May 14.

t Official holidays from May 12 to 14.

II Construction and Restoration Schemes.

- **a** Restoration of 15 Buddhist monuments, viz. The Great Stupa at Nakhon Pathom, the stupas at Nakhon Si Thammarat, Lamphun, Doisuthep Chiang Mai, Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon, Samut Prakan, at Praprang temple and Amphoe Muang, Sukhothai, the Footprint Saraburi, the Buddha Jinaraj image at Phitsanulok, the Mongkon Bopit image at Ayutthaya, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and the Bhukhow Tong (Golden Mount) in Bangkok.

- **b** Construction of a Buddhist Precinct.

- **c** Opening of public utilities and services such as dams, bridges, power and water supply plants, hospital and schools.

PART TWO:
BUDDHIST EDUCATION IN THAILAND

Introduction

The following history of Buddhism shows the evolution of Buddhist education on the part of bhikkhus in Thailand, from the Sukhothai period (B.E. 1800 or 1251 A.D.) to the present time. It is meant also to include other outstanding activities dedicated to the spreading of the Buddha's doctrine or conducive to its study and practice.

The earlier historical accounts will, except when closely related to those occurring here, be omitted, as there have been already a number of volumes compiled for this purpose.

As a matter of fact, the Buddha realized that education is an indispensable adjunct to the progress both of the state and the religious group, being the only element by which a person's talent may be developed and his work more effectively accomplished. Within the Order of Sangha he applauded the Venerable Rahula for the latter's deep yearning for study. To what extent he emphasized the importance of learning may be seen in the following stanza:

No ce assa sakā buddhi vinayo vā susikkhito vane andhamahiso va careyya bahuko jano.

Without [the principles of] learning and discipline, well-digested, many people would be like a blind bull wandering [helplessly] in the forest.

From various sources of documentary evidence in the Pāli Canon it may be assumed that Buddhist education in the time of the Buddha was simply the immediate embodiment of the Buddha's instruction into the daily life of a disciple, whether he be a bhikkhu or a layman.

Later, with the compilations of sub-commentaries and several other additional texts, the book-study, as opposed to the practice, was inevitably widened in scope and volume. We therefore often find in later compilations such sentences as 'Bhikkhus generally study the Pāli (original Message) together with the Commentaries.' In another sense, the study of Buddhism comes under two distinct courses, viz. the duty of book-learning, called in Pāli Ganthadhura, and the duty of Insight-practice, or Vipassanadhura in the Pāli.

Following are extracts from *Section One of the Readings,* by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, (pages 482-489) which tell of the above-mentioned facts and give other useful information about Buddhist education in ancient times.

"The bhikkhus' and novices' type of learning has from the beginning been divided into two kinds, viz. Ganthadhura, which means the memorizing of the Buddha's doctrine, including both the disciplinary parts and those of the Sermons, which were meant for individual, secluded practice. After the passing away of the Buddha the Holy Disciples called a general meeting (Synod), wherein the supposed 48,000 units (Dhammakhandha) of the Buddha's teachings were classified under three headings or Baskets (Pitaka) namely Vinayapitaka – the Basket or collection of Discipline, Suttantapitaka – the Basket or collection of Discourses and Abhidhammapitaka – the Basket or collection of Metaphysics. These three are called Tripiṭaka (the Three Baskets) and are henceforth the fundamentals of Buddhist texts.

"This Tripiṭaka was originally in Pāli, the vernacular language of the central provinces, wherein the (first) Council (Synod) took place. But when Buddhism was later introduced into foreign lands, the question of language posed a difficulty in understanding and memorizing. The northern countries, such as Tibet and China, preferring conveniency managed to translate Pāli into their own language to attract more people and did not bother to refer to the original again. This resulted in the gradual decline in, and finally the total disappearance of the importance of the Pāli Scriptures. Hence the various modifications and additions in northern Buddhism. The southern countries, however, such as Ceylon, Burma, Mons,

Thailand, Laos and Khmer, being more conservative, tried to preserve the Message in its original form and took pains to study the Pāli language for the sake of acquiring a first-hand knowledge of the Buddha's doctrine. Hence the pristine purity of the Message in the Southern School.

"Realizing how indispensable the study of Pāli is for the first-hand knowledge of the Message, with consequent right understanding, right practice and an unbroken progress of Buddhism, Thai monarchs have from the olden days, as the imperial upholders of the faith, given full support to Buddhist education by appointing well-versed bhikkhus to high offices and graciously accepting them under royal patronage. This gave rise to a system of examination by which to test the level of knowledge of each bhikkhu. If a student successfully passed a test he was given the title of Parien or, in informal language, a Mahā. When he later reached the prescribed period to become an Elder he would be bestowed an ecclesiastical title and rank according to his ability and aptitude.

"But in the early stages the study of the Pāli Message was not yet systematically organized. Generally, the contents of the Tripiṭaka were committed to memory and then revised and examined separately by each teacher. This resulted in a lack of uniformity and standardization in Buddhist education. Each teacher in each temple being free to provide education for his disciples in his own way and according to his

own liking meant that some places might specialize in some Baskets or collections, whereas others could also concentrate in other collections and still others might take pains to study the whole contents. Such was the situation of Buddhist education in Sukhothai until the arrival of Ceylonese Buddhism in the 18th century B.E."

Chapter One

Ceylonese Buddhism In Thailand

The Kingdom of Thailand is a place where Buddhism of various schools and sects arrived in successive periods. This began with the time of Asoka who, after the third Council at the town of Pātaliputta sent forth his religious missions to various lands. Of the nine pioneering groups of that time, the one that came to Thailand was led by the Venerables Sona and Uttara. From that time on Buddhism, together with the political situation of the country with which it was closely connected, underwent several upheavals and ordeals, sometimes succumbing to them and at other times successfully overcoming them.

Following are the views of some scholars concerning the state of affairs before the influx of Ceylonese Buddhism into Sukhothai.

(1) From *Summary of the History of Thai Culture*, an article by H.R.H. Prince Phidyalabha appearing in the monthly magazine *Silapakorn* (The Fine Arts), Volume 8, No. 1, we have learned that the Siamese are part of the greater Thai race, whose habitat covered the territory extending from the river Yangtse to the south-eastern sea of Asia. Except in Burma, Khmer and in some scattered groups of the aborigi-

nal inhabitants of the land, the majority of the people were geneologically of the Thai race with separate rulers and different ways of administration. The culture of these groups had in the course of time evolved into at least three different systems. In south China and in Vietnam they accepted the culture of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Confucianism; the Siamese group and Laos, together with the Burmese, Mon and Khmer, were influenced by Theravāda culture; whereas their Siamese brethren in the south of the peninsula took to the Islamic way of life.

"The original Thai race had its land in the kingdom of Nan-Chao – which is now in China – with the capital at the town of Talifoo. The kingdom thrived from the 12th to the 14th centuries B.E. With more contact with the Chinese and the consequent intermarriage with the reigning Tang dynasty, it was finally assimilated by the Nguan dynasty of China towards the end of the eighteenth Buddhist century. This, however, did not take place before a series of voluntary migrations by the Thai to the south. These people were the ancestors of the Thai Yai (Great Thai) nation, the Lao and the Siamese. The land into which they migrated southwards was mostly the dwelling-place of the Mon and Khmer. The oldest reliable source of information concerning this fact dates back to the eighteenth century B.E. From this we learn that King Meng Rai, having crossed the river Khong, established several sites as part of his kingdom, the most important of which was the town of Chiang Mai

on one of the tributaries of the Chao Phya. Further north there was another place, called Phayao, built by King Ngam Muang. Also, further south from Chiang Mai, on the Yom tributary, when the Khmer influence was driven out there arose another Thai state founded by King Sri Intharathit, whose mighty son, Ramkamhaeng, made it known far and wide for centuries. This was called Srisajjanalaya Sukhothai, or simply Sukhothai in general usage. These three independent states, with similar culture and faith, i.e. Theravāda Buddhism, are known to have been on intimate terms with one another.

"It is not definitely known, however, what was the basis of Thai culture before the founding of the three kingdoms. As far as can be traced back, they most likely professed Buddhism, with, of course, the remnants of the aboriginal faith of animism. With the later influx of Ceylonese Theravāda Buddhism in addition to the inherited Buddhism of King Bhukam, the former was firmly established by King Ramkamhaeng in B.E. 1800 in the Sukhothai Kingdom, from which it afterwards spread to Chiang Mai."

(2) From *Phra Ruang,* a book by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajānubhab, a passage reads:

"During the Khmer domination the Thais professed Mahāyāna Buddhism, which had extended from the town of Sri Vijai in Sumatra. Then, with the restoration of Theravāda Buddhism in Ceylon by King

Parakkamabahu, the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south was the first to accept it after the Mon. It was when the Sukhothai Kingdom was extended to that city that King Ramkamhaeng learned of this happening and, being impressed by its way of life, brought it to Sukhothai. This marks the decline of Mahāyāna, which finally gave way and was lost altogether from the kingdom."

THE CAUSE OF THE RISE OF LANKĀVAMSA BUDDHISM

Lankāvamsa Buddhism, also known by its general name of Ceylonese Buddhism, was introduced into Ceylon about B.E. 1696, when the pious King Parakkamabāhu initiated an ecclesiastic rehabilitation in his country. Under his patronage he invited the Elders to call a general meeting of learned bhikkhus for the sake of revising, classifying and standardizing the Buddha's teachings. As a result of this, the rules and regulations of administration and practice were thoroughly investigated, impartially scrutinized and finally laid down to the satisfaction of all concerned. As an honour for this memorial undertaking conceived by a Ceylonese king, it was called Lankāvamsa Theravāda Buddhism after the term 'Lankā', or Ceylon in the vernacular.

This monastic restoration was known and hailed far and wide in the Buddhist world, and attracted many bhikkhus of eastern countries, such as Thailand, Burma, Mons and Khmer, who ventured to Ceylon in an attempt

to study more of Buddhism there. The Ceylonese bhikkhus, however, treated those bhikkhus as their inferiors and required that they be once again ordained under the new system so as to be their equals as far as the Discipline was concerned. Seeing how the Lankā system was purified in line with the original Message, they willingly accepted the condition and thus became members of the Lankāvamsa Theravāda Buddhism.

Having studied and practised the Lankā system to their hearts' content, the eastern bhikkhus returned home to inform their people of the good news and sow the seeds of Ceylonese Buddhism in their homelands. Some even invited their Ceylonese brethren to accompany them on their homeward journey. The peoples of the eastern countries were also impressed by the knowledge and manners of the bhikkhus of Ceylonese Buddhism and consequently gave more and more of their children to be ordained. This resulted in the firm establishment of Ceylonese Theravāda Buddhism in Mons, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia to this day.

The fact that Ceylonese Buddhism arrived in Nakhon Si Thammarat in the eighteenth century B.E. is known from the Great Pagoda in that town, during the process of repairs of which it was revealed that the former, i.e. inner side of this Lanka-styled pagoda was built after the manner of Srīvijaya, one of the seats of Mahāyāna. This shows that it was later repaired and re-modelled into the shape and style as seen nowadays by the Ceylonese bhikkhus. Among other archaeological evidence is the

Emerald Buddha image in that temple, which was also sculptured after the Ceylonese fashion. Also, in *Buddha Images of Different Periods in Thailand*, a book by Luang Boriban Buriphan (Puan Inthuwongsa), the same fact is mentioned in the chapter concerning Buddha images of the Sukhothai period.

With regard to the Ceylonese bhikkhus invited from the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat, we learn from an inscription that King Ramkamhaeng allowed them to stay in accordance with their preference for a secluded place in a forest monastery. There, he would go twice a month, i.e. on the full moon and the new moon days, in an elephant procession to pay homage to them and also to make merit on the occasion.

To what extent the King's conduct and character had been moulded by Buddhism may be seen from his reputation as a pious, scholastic monarch of the time. Besides being known far and wide for his erudition in the Tripiṭaka, his way of life matched flawlessly with his knowledge, for he was known to have erected, in the midst of a palmyra grove, a stone platform upon which a bhikkhu was invited to deliver sermons on the Buddhist holy days while he himself took it as a rule to sit there on the other days addressing the people and discussing political affairs with his officers.

Another part of a stone inscription tells us how the King and his subjects embodied the Buddhist principles into

their daily lives. It reads (from *Coedes: Inscriptions…*, pp. 45–46):

> "The people of this state of Sukhothai are inclined towards charity and to observing the precepts. King Ramkamhaeng of Sukhothai, as well as his household and his court … men or women, they all have faith in the religion of the Buddha; they observe the precepts throughout the duration of the rains, after which they present the Kathina during the stipulated month thereafter. In this ceremony they present, by way of offerings, mounds of cowries, of betels, of flowers, also cushion seats and beds, as well as the usual accessories of the Kathina amounting to two millions each year. For this presentation of the 'Kathin' they go (far) out to the park (on the hill); and on their return to the city the cortege stretches from the park right up to the edge of the plain, which becomes resonant with the sound of music and chariots. Everybody is free to play, to laugh and to sing."

It is evident that the bhikkhus of the Lankavamsa were highly venerated, both because of their profound knowledge in the Scriptures and for devotion and austerity in their mode of practice. Reason of this fact may be seen in Colonel Luang Vichit Vadakarn's *Ram Kamhaeng's Inscriptions* as follows:

> "It is true that the bhikkhus from Nakhon Si Thammarat were more learned than those of Sukhothai and therefore were more venerated than the

> latter. This is because the southern cities were in all respects more advanced than, and had been so before, the northern part. Their prosperity was brought about through the two channels of civilization, one of which, that concerning arts and other branches of knowledge, came southward from Srivijaya Kingdom, and the other, that of religious culture, was received from the north, i.e. from the town of Nakhon Pathom. It is well-known that the spread of Buddhism southward took place a thousand years before its northward movement; hence the superiority of knowledge and conduct of the Si Thammarat bhikkhus over their Sukhothai contemporaries.

Ceylonese Theravāda Buddhism is said to have reached its peak of progress in the reign of the fifth monarch of the Sukhothai dynasty, grandson of King Ramkamhaeng, whose name was Leuthai or Lithai. H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajānubhab, in his *Phra Ruang*, says:

> "Lurthai's son, called Leuthai or Lithai in Pāli pronunciation, came to the throne as the fifth monarch of the Sukhothai dynasty. His official coronation name was Sri Suriyaphonsa Ram Mahādhammarājādhiraj, the first part of which was partly the combination of the names of his great-grandfather and his grandfather, whereas the second part, meaning 'The Righteous', serves to distinguish him from others and also to show the trend of his character and his reign. This was the first time such an epithet had been bestowed upon a Thai king and it might have been so

because of his erudition in religious knowledge prior to his accession to the throne. He is known to have been an enthusiastic student of a Ceylonese Elder and was thus impressed by the fact that the highest titles to be earned by a king were Cakkavattirājā … the Emperor or the Universal King and Dhammarājā … the Righteous One. The Great King Asoka of India was a perfect example of the two. He first resorted to wars and bloodshed – until his mighty forces and horrible fame were accepted everywhere – before he was revolted by the horrors of war and finally turned to a non-violent, philanthrophic course in accordance with Buddhist principles. It was because of his conversion to Buddhism, thereby earnestly embodying the Buddhist Path in his life, that he rightfully earned the title of Sridhammasokaraj, or Asoka the Righteous One.

"But King Lithai might have realized that his Sukhothai Kingdom had been on the decline and that should he choose to earn the former title of an Emperor or a Universal King, he would certainly have to walk the long, bloody path of wars and aggression, which, in spite of all such sacrifices, was still in doubt as to its possibility of winning him the title that most kings coveted. This was why he preferred to follow the second aspect of King Asoka and accordingly became an enthusiastic upholder of Buddhism. Thus, from the inscription we know that he dedicated a large sum of money to the welfare of bhikkhus and the construction of temples and their

dwelling-places. Buddhist education at this time was extensively encouraged and even (part of) the royal palace was offered as an educational institution for bhikkhus, … an example which was followed until the Ratanakosin period of the present dynasty. The King also took pains to include giving public instruction into his regular service for the welfare of his people. In B.E. 1905 he climaxed his religious faith by inviting the Mahāsāmi, the Patriarch of Ceylon, to be his Preceptor in the royal ordination ceremony, after which he spent a period as an earnest bhikkhu like the great king Asoka. On the day of his ordination, so says the inscription, there was an earthquake when he ceremonially accepted the Triple Gem as his Refuges in the process of the first stage of ordination as a novice, which was conducted within the royal palace. The second stage of ordination, by which he would be ordained as a bhikkhu, was to be performed in the forest temple of Mango Grove. And an earthquake took place again as soon as he stepped down from the royal chamber to proceed to that place. This being a miraculous happening unprecedented in history, the people had it inscribed in Thai, Khmer and Pāli languages on the stone tablet in honour of their King Lithai the Righteous One."

Chapter Two

King Lithai (B.E. 1890-1919)

King Lithai, also known as Leuthai, was the grandson of the great King Ramkamhaeng (B.E. 1820-1860). Being well-versed in religious knowledge he was the imperial patron of Buddhist faith in the land. He also established a new system of administration for the Buddhist order in accordance with the Ceylonese structure in order to fortify the stronghold of Buddhism in this area. For this purpose he invited an elder from Ceylon to be the patriarch of Sukhothai and divided the bhikkhus into two groups, called the Gāmavāsī and the Araññavāsī, i.e. the town-dwellers and the forest-dwellers. The former kind had the duty of studying the doctrine from the Scriptures, whereas the latter concentrated on the development of the mind and insight and, as its name implies, spent most of the time in forests or secluded places. He also built many Buddha images, two of which represent exquisite workmanship and are unsurpassed even to this day. These are Phra Buddhajinaraj and Phra Buddhajinasih, the former being enshrined in Mahadhat temple in the town of Phitsanulok, whereas the latter sanctifies the convocation hall of Bovoranives monastery in Bangkok. Both are held in great veneration throughout the country.

In addition to constructing many shrines and other holy places, in B.E. 1905 King Lithai renounced his throne to be ordained for some time in the Mango Grove forest monastery, an example which has become a tradition for Thai monarchs from that day to this.

He also produced a piece of Buddhist literature called *Tebhumikatha* or, in informal language, *Traibhoom Phra Ruang*, dealing with the various planes of existence in the universe. This is, except for the stone inscriptions of King Ramkamhaeng, the oldest Thai religious literature. It apparently took him more than thirty scriptures to complete his work. The fame of his scholarship spread far and wide, in neighbouring lands as well as within the country, thus bringing him the epithet 'The Righteous', called, in Thai, Phra Mahādhamma Rājā or Phra Sri Dhamma Tripiṭaka.

With regard to Buddhist education, it is certain that many bhikkhus were proficient in their religious knowledge, both from the Tripiṭaka itself and from later scriptures such as the commentaries, sub-commentaries and later texts. The King himself even allowed part of his royal palace to be used as a place for Buddhist education or had a monastery built within the royal precincts. In his search for an experienced teacher he once organized a religious mission to be sent to the court of Phra Mahā Swāmī, in Mons, asking for a well-versed elder to help conduct the ecclesiastical activities in his country. In response to the royal request an elder named Sumana, together with some other bhikkhus, was then sent to Sukhothai.

Besides studying in their own country, some bhikkhus elected to take an adventurous journey to foreign lands, such as Ceylon, Burma and Mons. The Venerable Sumana, mentioned in the previous paragraph, was in fact a Sukhothai bhikkhu who had gone to the Mons country to acquire more knowledge and had settled there for some time. Thus, it was to his own motherland he returned in response to King Lithai's command.

In spite of the lack of a definite course of study and examination processes, as there are now, it is clear that Buddhist education during this period reached a very high degree of development. All kinds of religious documents, from the original Pāli Tripiṭaka down to the latest texts, were extensively studied. And even the intelligent lay disciples, such as the King's courtiers, were no less interested in religious study. The bibliography at the end of the book, compiled by the king himself, showed clearly how thoroughly he had conducted his research for the purpose.

But the forest-dwelling bhikkhus were by no means neglected. It is true that they preferred a secluded life to one of publicity – which would have more or less hampered their progress in meditation and insight. Convinced of this fact, however, the people as well as their king readily allowed them to have their own way, but never failed to give them every help and protection whenever an occasion arose. To honour the name and memory of this righteous king, some passages will be quoted directly from *A History of Buddhism in Siam* (*English Version*),

written by His Highness Prince Dhaninivat, Kromameun Bidyalabh, (page 6) as follows:

> "A further influx of Sinhalese Theravādin Buddhism took place later in 1361, when King Lithai, grandson of Ramkamhaeng, delegated learned men to go and invite from the Mon country the "Mahāsāmi Sangharaj, the one possessed of a high code of morality, learned in all the Three Baskets (of the Canon of Buddhism), a native of Lankā, with conduct like unto that of the Purified Saints (Khī nāsava) of old." The advent of this venerable monk, whose name was Sumana, was the triumphant entry into the King's land, for it is thus described (in Coedes' *Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam*, Vol. 1, pp. 42 & 483:

> "At the time when the venerable monk had reached half of the way to the city from Nakon Pan, the King instructed builders to erect monastic quarters in the Mango Grove to the west of Sukhodaya. Roads were levelled and strewn with sand and looked fine from all sides, as if they had been constructed by Visvakarm, the celestial artificer. Upon their arrival fruits, floral offerings, candles, incense and 'plants of plenty' embellished their way of approach."

ECCLESIASTICAL TITLES IN THAILAND

The hierarchy of the Buddhist Church is closely connected with its educational system. We learn some of its history from H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajānuphab's *History of*

the Buddhist Church, to the effect that there were in the Sukhothai period two kinds of ecclesiastical titles, the former directly belonging to the Order and having to be gained through qualifications as determined in the Monastic Code of Discipline, the latter being specially bestowed by the king himself. The titles of Thera (Elder) and Mahāthera (Greater or Senior Elder) are examples of the former kind, while those of Sangharaj (Patriarch) and Poo Kroo (Guru Grandfather) belong to the latter. But it should be noted that the Sangharaj or Patriarch was then by no means Supreme, in the real sense of the word Raj or King. So there must have been more than one Sangharaj, each being a regional one, ruling over that part of the country under his administration. Of course, the ones governing the capital or cities were superior in rank to those in charge of smaller towns. In remote districts, however, the ruling bhikkhu was only a Phra Kroo, later variation of Poo Kroo or Guru Grandfather. This can be confirmed by a later ecclesiastical directory, in which several provincial (ecclesiastical) governors are mentioned also as Sangharāja. It was only in the reign of King Rama IV that this title was changed into Sanghapāmokha.

ECCLESIASTICAL TITLES IN CEYLON

According to the above-mentioned book, the Ceylonese hierarchy, though nominally different, corresponded to a great extent with that of Sukhothai. Her ecclesiastical titles were of also two categories, the higher one being called Mahāswāmi whereas the lesser one was simply

Swāmi. A stone inscription from the reign of King Lithai, grandson of King Ramkamhaeng, mentioned that in B.E. 1904 he delegated a mission to invite the Swāmi Sangharaj from Ceylon. The combination of both titles of the two countries no doubt suggested their equality to some extent.

More ecclesiastical titles in Sukhothai were mentioned in *Northern History*, revealing that the administration of the Buddhist Church there was carried on separately by two parties of bhikkhus, viz. the right-wing and the left-wing, with such nominations conferred upon them by the king as Phra Sangharaja, Phra Kroo Dhamatrailoka and others for the former group, and such titles as Phra Kroo Dhammaraja for the latter.

The above-mentioned facts, as seen also from both the Mon History and the Northern History, marked a new era in the ecclesiastical administration in the reign of King Lithai, the vestiges of which may be seen to this day. These were the classification of bhikkhus into two groups and the ecclesiastical titles bestowed by the king.

One reason for the division of the Sukhothai bhikkhus into two groups, according to the author of the above-mentioned book, might be that there already existed there two sects of bhikkhus, viz. the new Ceylonese sect, including the Ceylonese bhikkhus and those Thai bhikkhus who were once again ordained in Ceylon; and the former bhikkhus of Sukhothai belonging to the older Theravāda School. Since the former preferred a life of seclusion for

mind-development to one of activities within the city, the king arranged for them to stay in the forest monastery of Mango Grove. Thus, it might be based on the function of each that the two groups of bhikkhus were so called; the one which concentrated on book-studying and lived within the towns comprised mostly of the former residents of Sukhothai and the other, which chose the practical side and lived in secluded places would be generally the Ceylonese bhikkhus. The former group was called Gāmavāsī, the town-dwellers, who attended to the duty of learning, or Ganthadhura, whereas the latter was called Araññavāsī or forest-dwellers, who pledged themselves to the duty of mind-development or Vipassanā-dhura.

Chapter Three

Buddhist Education In The Lanna Kingdom

The Lannā Kingdom, north-west of Sukhothai, had a close relationship with Sukhothai even before the establishment of Chiang Mai as the capital of King Meng Rai. During the reign of King Ramkamhaeng, there were two famous heroes in the Lannā area, viz. Meng Rai in the region of Ngern Yang and Ngam Muang in the region of Phayao. It is said that these two and King Ramkamhaeng were, in their school days, under the same teacher and that this was the reason for their ties of amity and friendship until the downfall of Sukhothai to the power of Ayutthaya in B.E. 1921.

At the time Sukhothai flowered with Buddhism, Buddhist education was no less popular in this north-western region. Lannā bhikkhus were no less enthusiastic in furthering their education in foreign lands and the king also invited the Mahā Swāmī into his country. Thus, Pāli was extensively studied in Buddhist circles, which resulted in many Lannā bhikkhus being so accomplished in the language that several scholastic works in Pāli were produced during this period. Among them are the following sixteen, nowadays preserved in the National Library.

1. *Yojanā Vinaya*; explaining the *Vinaya* (Code of Ecclesiastic Discipline), both in meaning and grammar, especially in some aspects which were not yet clearly explained in the commentaries and sub-commentaries.

2. *Saddhamma-sangaha*: dealing with various Buddhist Councils or rehearsals (Sangāyanā) and miscellaneous doctrines.

3. *Adhidhamma-Yojanā*: explaining the seven books on Abhidhamma in some aspects which were not yet clearly explained by commentators and sub-commentators.

4. *Abhidhammatthasangahatikā-Yojanā*: explaining the Tika (sub-commentary) on the *Abhidhammattha-sangaha*.

5. *Mūla-Kaccāyana-Yojanā*: explaining the *Mūla-Kaccāyana* grammatical book.

6. *Ganthīdipanī Bhikkhupāṭī mokkha*: simplifying the Bhikkhupāṭī mokkha, or the principal disciplines, of Buddhist monks.

The above six items were composed by the Ven. Phra Ñanakitti of Chiang Mai in the 16th century A.D.

7. *Jinakālamālī*: dealing with the life of the Lord Buddha chronologically, and the history of

Buddhism in India, Ceylon and the northern country of Thailand, composed in B.E. 2060 (1517 A.D.) by the Ven. Ratana-paññāthera of Chiang Rai, another northern province of Thailand.

8. *Vessantaradīpanī*: explaining the *Vessantara Jātaka*, the Buddha's birth story, both in meanings and in grammar. B.E. 2060 (1517 A.D.).

9. *Cakkavāladīpanī*: dealing with the universe and its surroundings, including the destruction of the world (Lokavinasa) and the shape of the world (Lokasanṭhana). B.E. 2063 (1520 A.D.).

10. *Sankhyāpakāsakā Tīka*: dealing with six kinds of measurement. B.E. 2063 (1520 A.D.).

11. *Mangalattha-dīpanī*: explaining in detail the *Mangalasutta*. This is full of references which show that the author was a keen collector and thorough reader of all Pāli scriptures. B.E. 2067 (1524 A.D.).

The above four books were composed by Ven. Phra Sirimangalācārya of Chiang Mai, a northern province of Thailand.

12. *Sāratthasangaha*: dealing with 46 items of essential doctrines beginning with the miracles of the Lord Buddha. This volume was composed by the Ven. Phra Nandācārya of Chiang Mai.

13. *Padakkhama-Saddabhedacinta-Yojanā*: a commentary on the *Saddabhedacinta*, a Pāli text on grammar dealing with the divisions of words and their meanings, composed by Ven. Phra Dharmasenāpati of Chiang Mai.

14. *Camadevīvamsa*: dealing with the dynasty of Queen Camadevī, who reigned over northern Thailand, and the history of Buddhism. Written by Ven. Phra Bodhiramsī.

15. *Sīmāsankara-Vinicchaya*, or comments on the theme of the consecrated boundary, within which are performed activities of the Sangha.

16. *Abhidhammasangahapāli-Yojanā*: or grammatical notes and meanings based on a later text called the *Abhidhamma-Sangaha*.

Perhaps there were more books of this category, such as the *Paññasa Jātaka,* which is believed to have been compiled in this kingdom. The doubt, however, arises because the fact is not mentioned in its preface, as are the others.

The above-mentioned works in Pāli may be divided into two categories, viz. the one explaining the Norm and Discipline, with grammatical notes and meanings in accordance with the manners adopted in the commentaries, sub-commentaries and later sub-commentaries of Ceylon; and the other dealing with the historical

accounts, following the trends of such Ceylonese works as the Dīpavamsa and Mahāvamsa. Of the latter kind, compiled in the north-western region, the four outstanding ones are:

1. *Ratana Bimbevamsa*: dealing with the historical accounts of the Emerald Buddha image, compiled by Phra Rāja Paññā, possibly in B.E. 1912 (1429 A.D.).

2. *Sihinga Nidāna*: dealing with the historical accounts of the Buddha Sihinga image (now enshrined in Buddhai Sawan Hall, within the precincts of the National Museum), compiled by Phra Bodhi Ramsi. The date of compilation, however, is not exactly known.

3. *Cāmadevī Vamsa*: or history of the town of Haribhunjaya, compiled by Phra Bodhi Ramsī.

4. *Jinakālamāli* (or *Jinākalamā-lipakarana*): the history of Buddhism in the Lannā Kingdom. The first part was written by Phra Ratanapaññā in B.E. 2059 (1516 A.D.), whereas the second part, dealing with the history of Chiang Mai down to B.E. 2010 (1521 A.D.) is supposed to have been written by another scholar.

Although most of these scholastic works were compiled in later years, they were no doubt the blossoms of seeds sown in an earlier period in that land and they bore an undeniable evidence of how Buddhism had reached its zenith of development in those northern kingdoms of Thailand.

Chapter Four

Buddhist Education In The Early Ayutthaya Period

It is generally agreed that, as far as Thailand is concerned, the Buddhism of the Ceylonese Theravāda School reached the zenith of its progress in the Sukhothai period. From inscriptions we know that from the eighteenth century B.E. the kingdom was known far and wide as a stronghold of Buddhism, both in material aspects, such as in its architectural style, craftsmanship or literal capacities and in the immaterial ones, such as an earnestness in the practice of meditation and insight.

But the kingdom remained independent for 122 years, with five successive monarchs – from its founder, King Sri Indradit, to Lithai the Righteous or Devoted One. It then became a vassal state of its southern rival, Ayutthaya, in the reign of the sixth King Saileuthai in B.E. 1921, when the capital city of the Thai kingdom was moved to Ayutthaya. This, however, was true only as far as the administrative centre was concerned. For the spiritual glory and advancement was still firmly established there until the reign of King Borom Trai Lokanath, at least 70 years after its political downfall.

THE THAI MODE OF LIVING

The centre of the Thai community in the Ayutthaya period was the monastery, and Buddhism was the main theme of life. The Thai tradition of building a monastery was intended to serve two purposes, the one being for the sake of religious progress and the other being that such a sanctified area would be a living memorial of the family's ancestors to their descendants.

For these reasons numerous monasteries have been found in the ancient towns of Thailand, such as Sukhothai, Phitsanulok and Ayutthaya. In thickly populated areas there were often monasteries jointly constructed by people who considered it an act of great merit to build them. This, however, is not far from the fact, both from the material and immaterial aspects. The first and most evident fact is that monasteries are a source of harmony and unity as well as the symbol of Buddhism. They are places wherein bhikkhus can have their private quarters, apart from those of the laymen; wherein the study of the Buddha's doctrine is earnestly pursued and the grounds are always kept hallowed through their distinctive atmosphere. But that is not all that can be expected of monasteries. In those days they played a highly important role in education, as the people preferred to have their children educated in the monasteries, knowing that their young ones would be well educated both morally and intellectually. Moreover, as the centre of social activities, Thai monasteries are public places where people can meet, both to discuss common problems or for decent

entertainment during festival times. In the field of the arts, Thai monasteries have been the source and seat of fine arts which distinctly reflect the highly developed, artistic temperament of Thai craftsmanship in their elaborately carved or painted doors, windows, beams, pillars and the like. This can be seen to this day – even in the ruins of the Mahādhat Monastery of Sukhothai and the Sri Sanphej Monastery of Ayutthaya. Indeed, one can hardly witness such a magnificent piece of art without recalling the past days of greatness and glory.

BUDDHISM IN THE EARLY PERIOD

This period, spanning 139 years, began in the reign of King Ramadhipati I and ended with that of King Barom Trai Lokanath. It should be noted that since Ayutthaya was situated between Sukhothai and Khmer, the salient features of its arts, culture and religion were evidently a blend of both surrounding elements, which were in turn inherited from India. Hence the conglomeration in Ayutthaya of religious beliefs and practices made up of Brahmanism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Khmer style, and the Sukhothai Ceylonese Theravāda, each of which seemed to be inseparably associated with the rites, ceremonies and traditions. Thus, court precedure and the ceremony for vowing allegiance were examples of Brahmanic influence, whereas the architectural style of monastery construction was mainly after the Khmer style, which was archaeologically included in the Lop Buri period. The model of the Buddha image, although basically of the Khmer-influenced Lop Buri period, underwent some

modifications and was developed into a new class called U-thong Muang San period, which was regarded as one of superior workmanship.

Of the religious developments during the early Ayutthaya period, one was the peaceful blend of the former Sukhothai Theravāda Buddhism and the Ceylonese Theravāda. This resulted from the adaptation of the latter to the conditions of Ayutthaya and the modification of the former to suit the circumstances. But King Borom Trailokanath must have been greatly impressed by the Buddhism of his northern state of Sukhothai, for he was known to have been ordained in the Culamani monastery in Phitsanulok for eight months, and it has since become a tradition for every young Thai to be ordained once in their lifetime. This tradition was immediately followed by the young members of his own family and also by his courtiers, with consequent replacement of the Lop Buri or Khmer arts and traditions by those of Sukhothai.

BUDDHIST EDUCATION

During the early Ayutthaya, which began in the reign of King U-Thong or Ramadhipati I to King Borom Trailokanath (B.E. 1893-2031 or 1350-1488 A.D.), the trend of Buddhist education was not definitely known for lack of adequate evidence in historical accounts and archaeological remains. The following, therefore, is what can be gained from scant sources of information.

According to *The Thai Buddhist Pagodas,* a book by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajānubhab, "the site where Ayutthaya was situated used to be the seat both of Theravāda Buddhism, which had flourished in the time of Dvāravatī, and of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which had gained ascendency during the Khmer domination in Lop Buri. The country of Siam, as far as may be assumed from existing archaeological remains, lay between Mons and Khmer. The people formerly professed Theravāda, then followed Khmer's example by accepting Mahāyāna. Thus, their Tripiṭaka might be both of Pāli and Sanskrit." But it might also be that during the Ayutthaya period the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism, if any, would be almost negligible.

It will be seen that as far as religious development was concerned, the early part of the Ayutthaya period overlapped to some extent the latter part of Sukhothai. This was especially so in the reign of King Borom Trailokanath, who accepted, of course with some slight modifications as previously mentioned, Sukhothai Buddhism as Ayutthaya Buddhism. And some Ayutthaya bhikkhus also made their journey to Ceylon for further education. Thus, Ceylonese Buddhism came to Ayutthaya by two ways, viz. the second-hand element brought from Sukhothai and the first-hand, which was imported directly from a Ceylonese Elder named Vanarata. These three, according to some scholars, are collectively called 'Siam Vamsa'. It might be because of this fact that we know from later records that there were in Ayutthaya three groups of bhikkhus, two of whom, the Gāmavāsī town-dwellers and Araññavāsī

forest-dwellers, were of Sukhothai origin and the other one was the Vanarata group brought over directly from Ceylon. It was this latter group that was called the right-wing Gāmavāsī. Such evidence is obtained from H.R.H. Prince Damrong's *History of the Buddhist Church*.

From King Borom Trailokanath's ordination into the Buddhist Church one might say he was more or less inspired by the example of King Lithai of Sukhothai. It appeared that, as far as religious activities were concerned, he had tried continuously to follow in the footprints of that pious monarch of Sukhothai. As King Lithai had been known far and wide through his compilation of *Tebhumikathā*, he again took pains to write another piece of religious literature, called *Mahājāti* (the Great Birth), depicting the last birth of the Buddha before he was born as Siddhattha and attained to Enlightenment (i.e. when he was born as Prince Vessantara). Moreover, he did not neglect to imitate his religious idol even in construction. We know that he had several monasteries built both in Ayutthaya and Phitsanulok.

King Borom Trailokanath's ordination and other religious activities might have in turn inspired the kings of neighbouring lands with fresh courage and enthusiasm in Buddhism. From an inscription of the Culāmanī monastery we learn that the Kings of Chiang Mai, Hangsavati and Sri Satnāganahut, sent forth their religious missions to King Borom Trailokanath, bringing with them various bhikkhu requisites for use in the ordination ceremony as a token of their cordial appreciation. Meanwhile,

King Ramadhipati (Pitakadhara) of Hangsavati, according to *Records of Mon Ecclesiastical Activities* (*Rāmaññа Samanavamsa*), also, in B.E. 2018, sent some bhikkhus to Ceylon to be ordained there once again. They then came back and established the Ceylonese sect in their own country and by royal command all other bhikkhus in the land were to accept and follow the Ceylonese tradition and way of life as their own. Also, in Chiang Mai two years later, King Tilokaraj initiated a religious Council (Synod) for the sake of revising and settling on the contents of the Pāli Canon. This is, in a way, the eighth Council in the history of Buddhism. All these, however, seemed to be more or less inspired by Ayutthaya's initiative.

Chapter Five

Religious Language & The Writing System

LANGUAGE

It is well-known in Thailand that the Buddhist religious languages are Pāli and Sanskrit. But the point to be made clear is which language was used in which period. What should be considered, first of all, is the evidence to prove that the two languages were in fact used in religious circles. After that it may be as well to consider the facts individually in both cases. Following is the evidence showing how the two languages were used in the Ayutthaya period.

A book called *Siam Buddha Cetiya* (*Buddhist Pagodas in Thailand*) mentions as follows: "Since Thailand is situated between Mons and Khmer, it first accepted Theravāda Buddhism as its faith and later followed Khmer's example by turning to Mahāyāna. Thus, it might be that the Pāli Tripiṭaka used in Thailand was in both the Pāli and Sanskrit languages…" and in another place, "…the site of Ayutthaya used to be the seat of the two Schools of Buddhism, that is to say, both of the Theravāda, which flourished in the Dvāravatī period and of the Mahāyāna,

which predominated during the Khmer sovereignty in Lop Buri.”

The above evidence may be accepted as a basis for assuming that the two religious languages were used in Thailand and that Pāli was traditionally used for Theravāda and Sanskrit for the Mahāyāna. It seems reasonable to assume that the characteristic language of each group was used during its period of domination. But it is possible that the decline of each was gradual or unconscious rather than immediate and absolute. And there might have been an overlapping period during which, although the one rising to power was gaining influence, the other was still to some, although lesser extent, used in scholastic circles.

In *The Collection of Thai Inscriptions, Section 2*, by Professor George Coedes, there is a passage to the effect that one of the stone inscriptions obtained from Lop Buri is dated B.E. 1565-1568 (1022-1025 A.D.), and shows that during the reign of King Suriyavaraman there were dwelling in the town of Lava a number of bhikkhus of the Sthavīra or Sāvakayāna School, together with other monks, recluses and Brahmans. This gives us a wider picture of the religious conditions in the Lop Buri period, correcting to some extent the old belief that Buddhism in the said period was exclusively Mahāyāna and confirming the possibility of an overlapping period. It follows, however, that the two competing languages might have been simultaneously used and studied, but only in different places.

From The Beginning Of The U-thong Period To The End Of The Reign Of King Trailokanatha

To determine the facts about this period, more passages from the book *Thai Buddhist Pagodas* will have to be referred to. Here we are told that during the Ayutthaya period the knowledge of Theravāda was almost negligible and that, according to a stone inscription, there were in the town of Lop Buri bhikkhus of both the Sthavīra (Theravāda) and Mahāyāna Schools. It is therefore assumed, as was written on that inscription, that the original Sthavīra (Theravāda) School which came from Māgadha in India must have flourished there before it met its rival, i.e. the Mahāyāna, which had won popularity in Khmer and later extended its doctrinal territory into Thailand, thereby replacing Pāli as the inscription language.

Such facts lead to a possible conclusion that the early Ayutthaya, being the immediate continuation of Lop Buri, may have had Sanskrit as its standard language in religious circles. Another reason is that it was not until late in the reign of King Trailokanatha that the Lankāvamsa (of Ceylon Buddhism), including the one that came directly from its mother country and the other that extended its influence from Sukhothai, were firmly established in Ayutthaya. Thus, with the gradual decline of Mahāyāna here its traditional language, Sanskrit, was slowly but steadily replaced by Pāli, which came with the Theravādins. A similar happening can be seen in the Sukhothai kingdom, where Sanskrit had prevailed dur-

ing the Khnmer domination but later receded into the background with the arrival and general acceptance of the Lankāvamsa or Ceylon Buddhism, the then powerful sect of Theravāda.

TRANSCRIPTION CHARACTERS

This necessitates more historical facts concerning Ayutthaya and some passages from *The Ancient Indo-China Peninsula*, a book written by Sathienkoses, will be quoted (from the chapter concerning the kingdoms of Dvāravatī and Lop Buri) as follows:

> "With the downfall of the Fu-Nan kingdom in B.E. 1093 (550 A.D.) the Mon, who had then gained more power, took advantage of this to declare their independence and establish the Dvāravatī kingdom. Most of the people, however, were Thais who were still inferior to the Mon in their level of civilization. The Kingdom steadily prospered peacefully, possibly because the country of Jen-La, or former Khmer, was then too preoccupied with its own problems in the territory of Fu-Nan itself to direct more attention to other occupied territories. Thus, the kingdom of Dvāravatī, with part of its boundary encircling the Gulf of Thailand, reached the zenith of its prosperity late in the 6th century A.D. and lasted two hundred years after that, when its power gradually declined. However, it managed to remain independent until about B.E. 1550 (1001 A.D.), which marked its defeat at the hands of the Khmer."

The historical accounts quoted above may serve to lead us to the truth about its religious language. It will be seen that before its declaration of independence the Dvāravatī had been under Mon domination and was later, after its downfall, in the hands of the Khmer and that its territory embraced that of Ayutthaya. It can be reasonably supposed here that during the rise of the Theravāda (i.e. before and during its independence) the characters used for transliterating might have been the 'Krin' or 'Krone', which, according to professor George Coedes in his book *History of Thai Characters*, were then used in south India. Evidence to support this may be seen in a stone tablet found in Nakhon Pathom, on which was inscribed the verse 'Ye Dhammā hetuppabhavā'. When, however, the kingdom of Dvāravatī, later under the suzerainty of Khmer and the Theravāda, became more popular, the Khmer characters must have been used instead. This might be true even during the time when the two schools competed with each other for public acceptance, such as in the reign of King Suriyavaraman. The stone inscriptions – Nos. 18, 19 and 20 – bear evidence of this fact.

Later on, when Dvāravatī was included within the Thai kingdom by King U-Thong until King Borom Trailokanatha, whose reign marks the end of the early Ayutthaya period, the transliterated characters were entirely in Khmer. One work of religious literature in the latter's reign, the Tika, or sub-commentary of the Mahāvamsa, was also inscribed in Khmer characters. So said Prince Damrong, "In the early Ayutthaya period, the Thais, being more familiar with the Khmers than their

brethren of Sukhothai, were inclined to follow the tradition and language of their neighbour".

The historical accounts described above tell of one strange fact as far as religious language is concerned. It will be seen that in spite of the invention of the Thai characters by King Ramkamhaeng himself, when it came to transliterating the Ceylonese Tripiṭaka into Thai, he was somehow led to use Khmer characters instead of those of his own invention. Even in the reign of King Borom Trailokanatha, during which the Thai characters should have been widely accepted, the Khmer characters still persisted as the higher language of religious circles. This was possibly due to the confirmed habit of most people of taking the beaten track rather than venturing on a pioneering attempt. Thus, sanctity was traditionally attributed to Khmer characters, which were consequently taken by the masses as the inseparable symbol of religion.

HISTORY OF THE KHMER CHARACTERS

The inscribed Khmer characters, both in Sanskrit and Khmer language, at the time when Khmer powers extended to the Chao Phya River, differed from original characters in three aspects, as follows:

1. The Khmer court secretaries, being more particular than their Indian colleagues, had more artistic and elegant handwriting.

2. The finer lines on the tops of the original Indian characters were changed into bolder ones. The shape, which was formerly straight, became in most cases like a double-gabled roof or a twin French circumflex accent.

3. The original curvature was re-modelled, becoming polyangular in its features.

These are the characteristics of the ancient Khmer alphabet as seen in all Khmer inscriptions.

Two Kinds Of Khmer Characters

There are two kinds of ancient Khmer characters, one, the calligraphic style, being used generally for stone inscribing, and the other, a manuscript or quick-writing style, for other books. This is known from some of the stone inscriptions, which were written in the latter kind, in spite of the fact that the palmyra-leaf books, which were stylus-written, were all lost.

More about the ancient scribbling Khmer characters will be dealt with in the paragraphs concerning 'History of the Central Thai characters'. It should be noticed, however, that the former kind became the forerunner of the present Khmer characters, used for religious literature both in Cambodia and Thailand (B.E. 2468 or 1925 A.D.).

Chapter Six

Buddhist Education Of The Middle Ayutthaya Period (B.E. 2031-2275 or 1488-1732 A.D.)

This period lasts more than two centuries and will be sub-divided into another two smaller sections for the sake of the particular distinction of each.

The earlier part of the Middle Ayutthaya began in the reign of King Boromrājā the Third (B.E. 2031) to the end of King Āthityavongsa (B.E. 2173). During this period, which was ruled by eighteen successive monarchs, an example of internal relations which might affect Buddhist education was in the reign of King Song Dhamma (the Righteous King) as mentioned in a book called *The Buddha's Footprints,* as follows:

> "… His Majesty has witnessed the Holy Footprints, which, besides being furnished with the 108 sacred aspects in complete accordance with the Pāli Scriptures, correspond again with the Ceylonese report confirming that there exist such things in Thailand…"

More evidence of this, however, may be seen from Prince Damrong's *Punnovāda Poems,* which read:

"… During the reign of King Song Dhamma (B.E. 2163–2111) a group of Thai bhikkhus went to Ceylon in order to worship the Buddha's Footprints at Mount Sumanakuta. Asked by the Ceylonese bhikkhus why they should take pains to do so when there had been already in Thailand five such Footprints, together with the Suvannapabbata (the Golden Mount), the Thai bhikkhus then told all they knew to the King, who then ordered a thorough search throughout the country. After some time there reached the governor of Saraburi a report of a hunter named Boon, who, while he was out hunting one day, shot at a deer and chased it up a hill. The animal, he said, was apparently wounded and struggled painfully into a shrub. But a moment later it came out in the most normal condition and like a flash darted away as if nothing had ever happened. Astonished at what seemed to be a miracle before his eyes, he went into the shrub and saw what looked like stone footprints, about a metre in length, in which there was some water. Assuming that the water therein must have a healing power, by which the wounded deer had been saved, he applied it to the parts of his body which had been affected by ringworm and eczema for a long time. The water proved to have a real miraculous power, for his skin diseases were all immediately cured. Hearing this, the governor went out to see these things for himself and reported to the King, who hurried to the place and was also convinced of the fact as told by the Ceylonese bhikkhus…"

The above accounts tell us at least one thing: that there did exist religious relations between Thailand and Ceylon at that time. As a matter of fact, it was not directly mentioned what were the results of the Thai bhikkhus' venturous efforts to a foreign, far-off land, but it can be reasonably assumed that the venture must have at least widened the mental horizon of some religious groups and might have resulted in the adoption and adaptation of some activities and procedures for the sake of improvement and progress. Furthermore, the name of this king tends to suggest something special in his religious knowledge and conduct, which is confirmed by the story of his life before he came to the throne. For it was recorded that he had been a well-versed bhikkhu with the holy title of 'Bimala Dhamma', one of the senior ecclesiastical names bestowed upon bhikkhus proficient in religious study.

Religious Language & Characters For Transliteration

Judging from the steady progress of Theravāda Ceylonese Buddhism since the Sukhothai period, as well as the friendly relations between Thailand and Ceylon, the religious language must have been none other than Pāli, which is the traditional language of this school. Even the characters used for transliteration were still the Khmer-like Sukhothai. As mentioned earlier, the difficulty of this change lies in the fact that once an impression is firmly established in the people's minds, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to distract the public from its supposed value. This was possibly more so in Ayutthaya, which

had for a long time been the cradle of Khmer influence in this field.

Buddhist Education

It is not definitely known how Buddhist education in ecclesiastical groups was provided in this period but, considering the fact that King Trailokanatha had followed constantly in the footsteps of King Lithai, it is probable that the Sukhothai system of religious education was to a great extent adopted in Ayutthaya; the difference, if any, would have been in the modification of some details rather than in the principles. Even in the reign of King Song Dharma, which is about the end of this period, some accounts confirming this fact may be seen in the book called *History – Royal Edition*, to the effect that the Royal Palace was also used as a place for Buddhist education. Of course, this was only an additional institution of education apart from the usual instruction carried on in various monasteries. This is also related in *Status of the Wats* [i.e. temples] *In The Olden Days*, a book by Luang Vichit Vathakarn, as follows:

> "Since the olden days the temples have been the source and seat of enterprise and virtue. They were schools, since there were no other educational institutions; they were hospitals, the bhikkhus giving free service to patients in all walks of life; they were again clubs and meeting-places for all who cared to go and discuss their problems and exchange their ideas there. But they were also places of entertainment where, on

festival occasions people, young and old alike met to play games and enjoy themselves with shows and ceremonies and they were, above all, the source of mental power … those in trouble or despair would often be inspired with courage and enthusiasm as soon as they entered the sacred precincts. With cheerful encouragement from the bhikkhus, they would be refreshed with new hope and energy. Thus, a temple was everything to the people in those days."

Second Part Of The Middle Ayutthaya Period

This began from the reign of King Prasart Thong (B.E. 2113-2198 or 1630-1655 A.D.) and lasted to that of King Thai Sra (B.E. 2251-2215 or 1108-1732 A.D.), during which period there was no outstanding religious movement as far as foreign relations were concerned, except for that of Christianity, which was introduced in the reign of King Narai and which is beyond the scope of this work.

Religious progress during this period was achieved through the construction and reparation of temples rather than through the improvement of administrative principles. The ecclesiastical body under the Supreme Patriarch was, as before, divided into three main sections, with Somdet Phra Vanarat as head of the right-wing town-dwelling bhikkhus, Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāriya as head of the left-wing town-dwellers and Somdet Phra Buddhācāriya as head of the forest-dwelling bhikkhus. Other details, concerning the functions of smaller units

of the ecclesiastical body also remained the same as before.

Buddhist Education

In the reign of King Narai, there was what was called a Buddhist examination, as mentioned in Prince Damrong's *History of the Buddhist Order,* as follows:

> "In spite of the lack of information about the 'Parien' (title for those who pass the Buddhist examination in Pāli language) in the Ecclesiastical Titles Directory, there has doubtless been such an examination since Ayutthaya. The oldest information about this fact, however, is found in a book written by Monsieur La Lubere, the French Ambassador, which tells how, through the king's generous offerings to the bhikkhus, many of his indolent citizens found a shortcut road to wealth and fame. A great number of them thus entered the Order with only a material, selfish goal. Knowing this, the King suddenly ordered Luang Sorasakdi (who later became the Tiger-King) to examine the bhikkhus in their knowledge of Buddhism. The town-dwelling bhikkhus readily submitted themselves to the examination, but the forest-dwellers refused to co-operate, arguing that they should be examined by their own chief bhikkhu instead. However, this examination resulted in a great number of profligate bhikkhus being forced to disrobe through their lack of religious knowledge.

> There is a discrepancy here between La Lubere's account and that of *History – Royal Edition* concerning the event mentioned above. In the former it was Luang Sorasakdi who carried out this religious purge, whereas in the latter, Lord (or Chao Phya) Vijayendr was mentioned as the person who forced the bhikkhus to disrobe. In either case, however, an undeniable fact remains that there really was an examination in Buddhist knowledge by which a successful student was to be called a 'Parien' or a 'Mahā' in informal language. But in what way the examination was carried on in those days is still unknown."

Another item of documentary evidence confirming this fact can be seen in Prince Damrong's letter to Prince Narisranuvattivongse, dated 9th December B.E. 2490 (1941 A.D.), part of which reads:

> "... During the period of King Rama I there were still three grades of a 'Parien', like those of Ayutthaya, Thus, a 'Parien' was called junior or third grade when he passed the test on the Suttantapitaka (Basket or Collection of Discourses); he was called an intermediate or second-class Parien when he succeeded in his examination on the Vinayapitaka (Basket, or Collection, of Discipline) together with the Suttantapitaka of the third-class, it was only when he had successfully undergone the test on all three Baskets (i.e. the Abhidhammapitaka or Collection of Metaphysics in addition to the two mentioned previously) that he would be promoted to the first-class or

senior Parien. Then, in the reign of King Rama II, the Supreme Patriarch (Mee) invented a new system of studying Buddhism, by which the Parien was divided into nine steps. From that time on a Parien (or Mahā in informal language) has been distinguished according to the numerical steps he has successfully passed."

Chapter Seven

The Final Ayutthaya Period (B.E. 2275-2310 or 1732-1863 A.D.)

This period began with the reign of King Borom Kote and lasted to the end of King Ekathas, a period of only 35 years. This was the last stage in which Ayutthaya was the capital of Thailand.

It was in this short period, during which there were no significant religious movements within the country, that Thailand had an opportunity to return Ceylon's kindness and proudly pay her debt of honour in full. According to *The History of the Buddhist Church*, in B.E. 2296 (1753 A.D.) the island of Ceylon was laid waste by heretics, who brutally eradicated the Buddhist Church as well as the sovereignty of the unfortunate land. When, afterwards, King Kitti Siri Rajasri liberated the country from the enemy's yoke and established his capital at the town of Singha Khandha, which is today known as Candy, he made up his mind to restore the Buddhist Church and thus revive Buddhism in his homeland. Hearing of the fame of Ayutthaya as the land of pure Theravāda Buddhism, he sent a religious mission to Thailand, asking for an elder together with a number of bhikkhus to go to his country and ordain his people there. Having learned of what had happened in Ceylon, King Borom Kote had two elders, viz.

Venerables Upāli and Ariyamunī, together with twelve bhikkhus, sent to Ceylon in response to King Kitti Siri's request. Six years later (i.e. in B.E. 2302 or 1759 A.D.), in the reign of King Ekathas, two other elders, named Visuddhāacāriya and Varañānamunī, together with three bhikkhus, were sent to Ceylon in order to replace the first group. This religious contribution to Ceylon on the part of Thailand was indeed a remarkable event in the history of Buddhism and although it is casually mentioned in the records of Thai history, the Ceylonese people felt they owed Thailand a great deal for this restoration of the Buddhist Church in their homeland. To symbolize this gratitude a book was written in Ceylon in honour and memory of this happy incident. It was named *Siamū Pasampa Dāpavatti*, and deals with Thailand's contribution and activities on this occasion.

The Ordination Tradition

It should be noted here that formerly the ordination of a person generally resulted from his own voluntary intention without any external background whatever. It was only in the reign of King Borom Kote that a person's ordination into the Buddhist Church was required as a branch of education for the cultured society of the time. It was said that none of his courtiers could be appointed to high ranks unless they had been bhikkhus for some time. Members of his royal household were no exception to this rule. It was because of this supplement of Buddhist education as a prerequisite for higher office that when the king himself passed away, in B.E. 2301 (1158 A.D.), the

Crown Prince Uthoomphorn also entered the Buddhist Order three months after his coronation (i.e. when he was old enough, according to the rules of monastic discipline, to become a bhikkhu).

Examination Procedure in Buddhist Education

Unfortunately, details of this are not definitely known nowadays, as statistical records and documents were mostly destroyed with the downfall of Ayutthaya. It is only from later records that we learn that a third grade of Parien (or certificate) was awarded to bhikkhus who could translate the Suttantapitaka (Basket or Collection of Discourses), a second grade of Parien (or diploma) was given to those who could translate the Vinayapitaka (Basket or Collection of Discipline) in addition to that of the third class, and a first grade (or degree) was to be conferred to those who could translate all three Baskets of the Pāli Canon. There was, however, no mention of any part or section of any Basket which would be used especially for the purpose of examination.

THE THON BURI PERIOD (B.E. 2310-2325 or 1167-1181 A.D.)

The heroic and self-sacrificial attempt to liberate the country from Burmese hands began in the very year of the downfall of Ayutthaya (B.E. 2310 or 1161 A.D.), but it took King Thon Buri about three years before he and his compatriots could gather sufficient forces to drive out the enemy and thus declare the independence of the

country. After that the capital was moved southwards to Thon Buri.

After the country was brought back to a state of normalcy, King Thon Buri at once began his work on the restoration of Buddhism. The Buddhist Church of that time having suffered the same plight as the State, he sent out his men to seek virtuous and well-behaved bhikkhus and invited them back in order to re-establish the Buddhist Order in the new city. In addition to this, he had several monasteries built and devoted much of his time to the study and practice of Buddhism himself.

With regard to Buddhist education during this short period, it can generally be said that since the country must always have been on the alert for any indication of the enemy's attack, development in this field was still more or less hampered. But due to the zealous efforts of the king himself, who always managed to find time for Buddhism in addition to his perpetual burden of fortifying the country against further aggression, the examination of bhikkhus in their Buddhist knowledge was carried on more or less as in Ayutthaya. We can ascertain this fact from various names of the Parien (or those who have successfully passed the examination in Pāli language) listed in the old documents referring to the happenings in this period. These names included Mahā Mee (Mahā is the informal form of Parien), the first-class (or degree grade) Parien of Lieb Monastery (this bhikkhu was later, in the time of King Rama II of Chakri Dynasty, the Supreme Patriarch); Mahā Nark, first-class Parien of

Bang Va Yai Monastery; and Mahā Kesorn, second-class (diploma grade) Parien of Bhodharam Monastery). These were all Pariens in the reign of King Thon Buri and were bestowed with ecclesiastical titles in the succeeding reign of King Rama I. Therefore it can be reasonably assumed that Buddhist education during this reign had been revived and carried on as energetically as the situation of the country permitted.

SYLLABUS FOR BUDDHIST EDUCATION

The following is the syllabus that was used – with some slight modifications – after the course was divided into nine steps or grades.

Grades 1, 2 and 3: The text to be studied was the *Dhammapada*. A student had to pass these first three grades simultaneously before he could be called a Parien. Success in this grade entitled a student to a fourth-class Parien (or common Parien).

Grade 4: The text was the *Mangalatthadīpanī, Part One*. A student was here called a third-class Parien.

Grade 5: Firstly, the text prescribed for this grade might be *Pālimuttaka Vinayavinicchaya Sangaha*. Later, it was changed to *Sārattha Sangaha*. But it was changed back again to the text first prescribed. A student was called a second-class Parien if he passed this grade.

Buddhist Education during the reign of King Rama I was said to have been considerably revived and firmly established once again, as in the time of Ayutthaya. One of the religious activities to be noted was the revising and settling on the contents of the Tripiṭaka before the General Council under royal patronage. This was the most significant religious movement of the time since most of the scriptures had been destroyed by fire or lost when the country was plunged into a state of chaos following the ruin of Ayutthaya. From *Buddhism in the Kingdom of Thailand*, an English booklet published by the Mahamakut Educational Council in commemoration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddhist Era, we learn of further details as follows:

> "In B.E. 2331 a Council of Bhikkhus was convened for the sake of settling … the contents of the Tripiṭaka and having those settled passages written down with a stylus on books made of corypha-palm leaves. Such books were numbered 345 in all, i.e. 80 for the Vinaya, 160 for the Suttas, 61 for the Abhidhamma and 53 for the 'Saddavisesa' [grammar] texts. The Council, held at the present Wat Mahadhat, lasted five months and was under the chairmanship of a Supreme Patriarch (whose name was Sri). The participants were 218 bhikkhus together with 32 lay scholars. This was the second Council held in Thailand."

(The first one took place in B.E. 2020 under King Tilokaraj of Chiang Mai.)

In the reign of King Rama II there was an outstanding change in the system of monastic education. As mentioned before the Parien, or those who had successfully passed the Pāli examination, were divided into three grades, viz. the first class, corresponding to the degree grade; the second class or diploma grade; and the third class or certificate grade. Considering this division to be loose and insufficient, the then Supreme Patriarch, whose name was Mee, elaborated the course by further dividing it into nine steps. This was accepted and has been followed ever since.

During the reign of King Rama III a remarkable event in the field of Buddhism may be known from *History of the Buddhist Church*, page 50-51, as follows:

> "… King Nang Klao (Rama III) encouraged the study of Buddhism more than ever before. During his reign, King Rama IV (before his accession to the throne) had for a long time remained in the priesthood and had been greatly interested in the study of Buddhism. He was a profound scholar in Pāli and was the first member of the royal household in recorded history who took the Pāli examination…."

And, in another place:

> "King Rama III never failed to repair old monasteries as well as to construct new ones. He also encouraged and invited his courtiers and relations to do so. This was done with a view to embellishing the country

> with holy places, like Ayutthaya. Thus, the existing monasteries in Bangkok were to a great extent constructed in this period, and the number of bhikkhus and novices were then exceeding that of the previous reigns. The educational programme and activities, however, were in the charge of King Monkut or Rama IV (who was at that time still a bhikkhu). This resulted in the great progress of Buddhist education."

To what extent King Rama III encouraged the study of Buddhism may be seen from the facts that he allowed the Pāli examination to be conducted within the royal palace and that he graciously extended royal support even to the parents of Pariens. In this reign the Pāli course comprised, as before, nine steps or grades. A bhikkhu who was to be called Parien had to at least pass the third step of the Pāli course. He was then called a third (lower) class Parien. His success from the fourth to the sixth step entitled him to a second (middle) class Parien, whereas the seventh to the ninth grade would earn him the title of a first (high) class Parien.

Religious Mission to Ceylon

It was recorded that in the reign of King Rama II a religious mission was sent to Ceylon to search for some scriptures that were still lacking in Thailand. Later, in the reign of King Rama III, two more groups were sent out, entrusted with the same objective. These ventures contributed much to the study and practice of Buddhism to this day.

The reign of King Monkut, or Rama IV, was really a milestone in the development of the country, both in ecclesiastical affairs and those of the states. Since he had been a bhikkhu for a long time (21 years) during the reign of his royal brother and was well-known for his proficiency in religious knowledge, he lost no time in authorizing several other delegations to Ceylon, in order to bring back the holy scriptures there for the sake of comparison with those in Thailand. The Mon scriptures were also included in his research work.

Friendly relations with foreign countries were greatly enhanced during his reign, resulting in the Bodhi seedling for Buddha Gaya and Buddha images being brought over from India. Even Mahāyāna Buddhism was also under royal patronage. This resulted from several waves of immigration of the Mahāyānist Annamites (Vietnamese) which began in the Thon Buri period. This occurred once again in the reign of King Rama I and yet again in the reign of King Rama III.

The Former Examination Procedure for Buddhist Education

According to *A Collection of Articles* by H.R.H. Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, Book 1, pp. 489-526, the examination for Buddhist education was an affair of state, being included in the functions of a king as the upholder of the faith. This was therefore to be performed only after the royal command for the purpose. The ecclesiastical authorities would then meet and arrange for the

examination, with government officials giving whatever help or service was necessary for the execution of the work. In the reign of Kings Rama I & II, however, there was no fixed time for the purpose, since the country was still in a state of hasty and extensive renovation and was now and again occupied with defensive wars. It was only when there was an interlude of peace that the king, seeing that there might have been an accumulating number of bhikkhus who were waiting to be promoted, gave an order to arrange for the Pāli examination. Thus, it took several years before a student bhikkhu could have an opportunity to prove the skill and ability of his knowledge. In the time of King Rama III, however, the country was more peaceful, so the king, realizing that the study of Buddhism had made great progress throughout these times, allowed the examination to be conducted every year. This has been the practice ever since.

Place Of Examination

Formerly the examination was traditionally conducted in the monastery, which was the residence of the Supreme Patriarch. It was only when His Majesty the King occasionally wished to witness the event that he graciously granted the examination to be carried on within the Royal Palace. Thus, the work was first done in Raghang monastery in Thon Buri, and then moved to Mahadhat monastery in Bangkok, which remained as the place of examination from the time of King Rama I to King Rama III. The main shrine (Uposatha) and other buildings therein were then demolished for the sake of repairs and

the site was then further moved to Chetuphon monastery. Later, in the reign of King Rama IV, who was himself well-versed and profoundly interested in the study of Buddhism, the examination was ordered to be carried on within the Royal Palace every year. It was sometimes conducted in the Buddhai Sawan Hall, and at other times within the convocation hall or main shrine (Uposatha) of the temple of the Emerald Buddha, always with His Majesty presiding over the occasion. This practice was followed by King Rama V long after that.

Period Of Examination

Examination was usually carried out at the termination of Rains Retreat, except on some special occasions when it was fixed within that period. Notice of this event was given in advance by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to the elders who held administrative positions over various sections of the country. They then informed the abbots under their authority of the Royal Command in order to prepare their own students for the forthcoming event. Students who wished to enter the examination in that year were to enroll themselves at the place of education where they were attached. The lists would then be sent up to the examination committee to be kept as statistical documents. It was then regarded that bhikkhus who dwelt in the royal monastery (where they were as a rule provided with better conveniences and support than those in private monasteries) owed the king a debt of gratitude and had therefore a moral duty of studying and practising the Buddha's Message in return for His

Majesty's kindness. Bhikkhus who idled away the time were regarded as taking unfair advantage of the royal support and were a disgrace to the monastery they lived in.

Method Of Examination

The method of examination used during this time was still an oral one and not written, so a set of committees could not examine very many students in a day. The greatest number was just five. But this was sometimes reduced to four, owing to the length of the examination questions and the ability of the students themselves. For this reason a period of examination usually lasted about two months. On the examination day a student whose turn it was to be examined went to the supervisor and chose his examination questions by lot. Various question papers had been written and put into a number of sealed envelopes. The envelope picked up at random from the heap would thus be the one containing the questions he had to answer. This shows that, unlike a written examination, students of the same grade had to answer different questions in different parts of the prescribed course.

Another interesting fact about this process of examination was the way in which the knowledge of Mon bhikkhus was tested. Since the Thai Elders who were in the examination committee could not understand the Mon language, there had to be another Mon bhikkhu included in a special committee for the Mons. The Mon candidates then had a two-fold duty in the process. Firstly, they were to translate Pāli into Mon for the Mon

examiner and secondly they were to speak the syntax and grammatical functions of the Pāli sentences in Pāli for the Thai examiner, as Pāli was understandable to the Thai bhikkhus, Here, the student's success was based on the unanimous approval of the Thai and Mon Elders who examined him.

Chapter Eight

The Ratanakosin Period (B.E. 2325- or 1782- A.D.)

The Ratanakosin period, ruled by the present Chakri Dynasty, began in the year B.E. 2325, His Majesty King Bhumibol being the ninth in succession. The first three reigns were marked by the energetic rehabilitation of home affairs as well as the bitter and incessant struggles against outside aggression. Construction work was untiringly carried on and administration procedure adopted in the style of Ayutthaya as much as possible. At the same time the armed forces were no less active in their responsibility of fighting for and safeguarding the independence of the country. Many wars were waged and every time the aggressors' forces were driven back with great losses. It was not until about a century later, that is in the reign of King Rama IV, also known as King Monkut, that the general situation changed and the country entered a new era of development.

The courses of Buddhist study at present (2523 or 1980), according to the Annual Report of the Department of Religious Affairs, are as follows:

THE COURSES OF BUDDHIST STUDY

These can be roughly divided into two categories, viz. the course of study in the vernacular and that in the Pāli language, the former being called Nak Dham and the latter Pāli, or Parien, course.

The Nak Dham course is divided into three grades, viz. the elementary, the intermediate and the advanced grade.

The Nak Dham Course

The Elementary grade of this course consists of the following subjects:

a) *Essay-writing*. This is based on the *Books of Buddhist Sayings or Proverbs, Book One*, being short sayings mainly of the Buddha. The students are required to compile an essay based on any of those sayings.

b) *Dhamma knowledge*. This is based on the books called *Instructions for Newcomers*, in which there is an elementary knowledge of Dhamma and the Disciplinary articles for the bhikkhus.

c) *Life of the Buddha*. The books used for this purpose are *Life of the Buddha, Books One and Two*, compiled by H.R.H. the late Supreme Patriarch Prince Vajirañaṇavarorasa and also *Book Three*, compiled by another Patriarch named Pussadeva (Sa).

d) *Monastic Rules or Code of Discipline*. The books to be used are called *A Treatise of Discipline, Book One* and *Book of Rites, Book One*, by the Educational Organization.

(Unless otherwise stated, the books used for the Nak Dham course, in whatever grade, are to be understood as having being compiled by H.R.H. Prince Vajirañaṇavarorasa, the late Supreme Patriarch, whose literary output was far more voluminous than any others).

The Intermediate grade of the Nak Dham course consists of the same subjects as the elementary grade, but the books used are those of the higher course, as follows:

a) *Essay-writing*. Based on *Buddhist Sayings, Book Two*, which are longer than those in *Book One*. The students are required to write an essay joining two of the Sayings in that book, making them merge together in one complete essay, and referring to two other Sayings as support of their reasoning.

b) *Dhamma Knowledge*. This is based on the *Book of Numerical Sayings, Part Two,* which is wider in scope than *Part One*, which is part of the book used in the elementary grade called *Instructions for Newcomers to the Order.*

c) *Life of the Buddha's Disciples*. Based on the book of that name supplemented by another book entitled *History of Buddhist Synods* and another version of the Buddha's life-story in legendary form, the latter being compiled by the late Supreme Patriarch Pussadeva (Sa).

d) *Monastic Discipline*. The book used in this grade is one in the same series used in the elementary grade. It is called *Treatise on Discipline, Book Two*; another is the *Book of Rites, Book Two* by the Educational Organization.

The Advanced grade of the Nak Dham course consists mainly of the four subjects, but the books used are those of the higher classes, as follows:

a) *Essay-writing.* Joining three Buddhist Proverbs into one topic of essay, with three references from Buddhist Scriptures. This is based on *Buddhist Sayings, Book Three*.

b) *Dhamma*. The books to be used are: *Comment on Dhamma* on the advanced level and the *Cycle of Rebirths, Themes of Meditation and Insight*, some suttas, such as *Mahā satipaṭṭhana*, *Girimānanda* and the knowledge to explain the Dhamma on the advanced level in various aspects.

c) *Life of the Buddha*, including the life-stories of more Arahant Disciples.

d) *Monastic Discipline*, based on the *Treatise on Monastic Discipline Book Three*, which is more advanced than the former two.

Lay disciples are also admitted to sit for examinations in a course with three grades parallel to the Nak Dham course for bhikkhus. It is called the Dhamma Sikkha course, also having three grades. The subjects for study are mostly the same as those studied by bhikkhus, the exception being that they do not study the Monastic Discipline, which is meant especially for bhikkhus. Instead, they are required to concentrate on Discipline for the Laity, with some books newly compiled for the purpose.

The Pāli Course

This is also called the Parien or Parien Dham course, being divided into three grades as follows:

a) *The Elementary Grade*, including the first, second and third years, or steps. The subjects for study are:

a-1. & a-2 For the 1st and 2nd years. Elementary Pāli Grammar and Translation from Pāli into Thai. Texts used are those on Pāli Grammar and

Commentary on the Dhammapada, Books 1 to 4 (the first half).

a-3. The third year: Pāli Grammar – Analysis Translation from Pāli into Thai. (The texts used for this year are *Commentary on Dhammapada, Books 5 to 8,* i.e. the second half).

Other aspects of Pāli Grammar, testing the capacity for memorizing and understanding.

Writing formal Thai language in its every aspect, secular and religious.

b) *The Intermediate Grade*, including the fourth, fifth and sixth years or steps. Subjects for study are:

b-1. Fourth year: Translation Pāli-Thai from the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī, Section One*, compiled by a Thai bhikkhu in the north, being extensive commentary on the Mangalasutta. Thai-Pāli translation from *Dhammapada Commentary Book One*.

b-2. Fifth year. Pāli-Thai translation from the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī, Section Two*; and Thai-Pāli translation from *Dhammapada Commentary, Books 2 to 4*.

b-3. Pāli-Thai translation from the *Samanta pasadika* – third, fourth and fifth sections; and Thai-Pāli translation from *Dhammapada Commentary, Books Five* to *Eight*. Examination papers to be in more detailed and complicated forms than in the previous years.

c) *The Advanced Grade,* including the seventh eighth and ninth years. Subjects for study are:

c-1. Seventh Year: Pāli-Thai translation from the *Samantapāsādikā* – the first and the second sections; and Thai-Pāli translation from the *Maṅgalatthadīpanī*.

c-2. Eighth Year: Pāli-Thai translation from the *Visuddhimagga*; Thai-Pāli translation from the *Samantapāsādikā* – the first and the second sections; and poetry-writing in Pāli verses on a theme to be determined by the examiners.

c-3. Ninth Year: Translation Pāli-Thai from the *Abhidhammatthavibhavinī*; Thai-Pāli translation from *Visuddhimagga*; and general essay-writing in Pāli on a theme to be determined by the examiners.

(from the book printed by the Mahamakut Buddhist University)

Some Facts and Figures on Buddhism in Thailand

1. Of the 60,617,200 strong population of Thailand, based on household registrations of the Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior recorded on December 31, 2001, the percentage of the population, religiously distributed, as mentioned in the 2001 Annual Report of the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, is as follows:

Buddhists	94.57%	=	57,324,000
Muslims	4.65%	=	2,815,900
Christians (all denominations)	0.72%	=	438,600
Hindus, Sikhs and others	0.05%	=	27,700
Unidentified	0.01%	=	10,500

2. Data from the Department of Religious Affairs recorded in 2001:

2.1. Thai Buddhist Monasteries 32,710
Thai Buddhist monks 267,818
Thai Buddhist novices 103,026

2.2. Other legally recognized Buddhist ecclesiastical communities:

Mahāyāna Chinese Buddhist Sect
Monasteries 9
Monks 98
Novices 129

Mahāyāna Vietnamese Buddhist Sect
Monasteries 12
Monks 122
Novices 115

3. Data from the Department of Religious Affairs, 2001:

3.1. Ecclesiastical schools for teaching both Pāli language and Buddhism, as well as those for teaching only Buddhism 10,392
Teachers 34,135
Students 256,790

4. Two Buddhist Universities:

4.1. Mahāmakut Buddhist University (Educational Council of Mahāmakuta-Rajā Vidyalaya) was established as an Ecclesiastical Buddhist University on November 30, B.E. 2488 (1945 A.D.) and officially opened on September 16, B.E. 2489 (1946 A.D.).

4.2. Mahāchulalongkorn Buddhist University (Mahāchulalongkorn-Rajā Vidyalaya) was established as an Ecclesiastical Buddhist University on January 9, B.E. 2490 (1947 A.D.).

5. Two Buddhist Associations and their affiliated Provincial Buddhist Associations:

5.1. The Buddhist Association of Thailand Under Royal Patronage was established on February 28, B.E. 2476 (1933 A.D.). It has 75 affiliated Provincial Associations throughout the country.

5.2. The Young Buddhist Association of Thailand Under Royal Patronage was established on June 14, B.E. 2493 (1950 A.D.). It has 45 affiliated Provincial Associations throughout the country.